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ABSTRACT

This book examines selected aspects of school social work program supervision in Iowa from a best practices framework. For each chapter, best practices are identified by referencing and synthesizing the experience base of program supervisors, the literature, and professional standards. Best practice statements are proposed for each component of program supervision and are explicitly identified and discussed. Chapters have the following titles and authors: (1) "Best Practices in the Recruitment and Selection of School Social Work Personnel" (James P. Clark); (2) "Best Practices in Planning and Implementing School Social Work Staff Development Programs" (Charlene Struckman); (3) "Best Practices in School Social Work Performance Appraisal" (Phil Piechowski); (4) "Best Practices in Evaluating School Social Work Programs" (Donald Bramschreiber and Al Flieder); (5) "Best Practices in School Social Work Practice Evaluation" (Marlys Staudt and Catherine Alter); and (6) "Best Practices in the Supervision of School Social Work Practicum Students" (Roberta Kraft-Abrahamson and Dea Ellen Epley Birtwistle). Between 10 and 25 references accompany each chapter. (DB)

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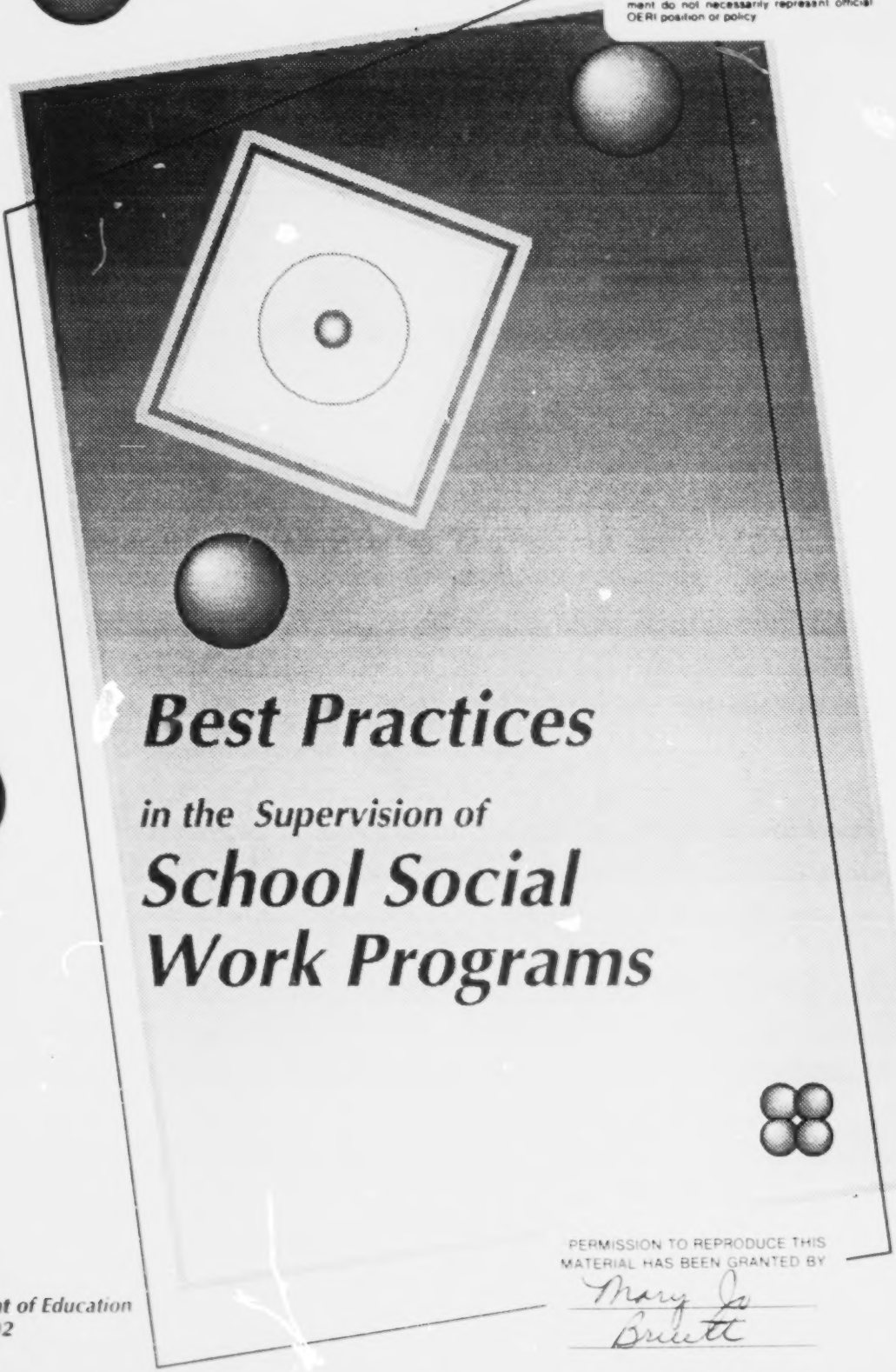

Best Practices

in the Supervision of

School Social Work Programs

Iowa Department of Education
1992

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Best Practices in the Supervision of School Social Work Programs

Edited by James P. Clark

Iowa Department of Education
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Best Practices in the Supervision of School Social Work Programs: An Overview

James P. Clark

School social work programs in Iowa are diverse and dynamic in response to the changing needs of schools, families and communities as they strive to provide quality programs and services for students requiring special education. Since Iowa's area education agencies (AEAs) were established in 1975 school social work program supervisors have played a key role in designing and continuing to develop and refine school social work services in ways that maximize their effectiveness and efficiency. As a result school social work services have made a significant contribution to special education by continuing to emphasize the importance of mitigating the social barriers that impede students' educational success.

This book represents an effort to synthesize what has been learned from this experience by proposing best practices in selected aspects of school social work program supervision. The interest in this project emerged from discussions at statewide AEA school social work supervisor meetings during the 1990-91 school year. Included in these discussions was a review of the 1985 Iowa Department of Education publication *Social Work in Iowa Schools: A Guide to Practice,* which focused primarily on describing the diverse and common elements of school social work practice throughout the state. It was agreed that while this publication has been valued as a useful reference for school social work practitioners it gave only limited direct attention to the supervision of school social work programs. Further, it was agreed that the development of a publication that examined selected specific aspects of program supervision in a best practices framework was needed and would be a timely complement to *Social Work in Iowa Schools: A Guide to Practice.*

Support of best practices in program supervision is essential if the quality of school social work services is to be maintained. This is especially critical at a time when fiscal supports for programs are limited and when special education reform efforts such as Iowa's Renewed Service Delivery System initiative offer opportunities to implement improvements and innovations in the delivery of special education instructional and support services. Program supervisors are in a key position to facilitate improved delivery of school social work services in this initiative and will accomplish this most effectively by engaging in best practices.

For each of the chapters in this book, best practices have been identified by referencing and synthesizing the experience base of program supervisors, the literature, and professional standards. Best practice statements are proposed for each component of program supervision and are explicitly identified and discussed at the end of each chapter.

The recruitment and selection of high quality social work personnel is often regarded as one of the most important responsibilities of the school social work program supervisor. Chapter 1 discusses factors affecting recruitment, current recruitment

practices, a description of steps in the recruitment and selection process, and proposes best practices for recruiting and selecting school social work personnel.

Charlene Struckman addresses the vitally important topic of planning and implementing staff development programs in chapter 2. She describes current staff development practices, presents a comprehensive and critical review of the literature on staff development, proposes best practices for supervisors, and concludes with a discussion of the importance of establishing effective school social work staff development programs for the future.

In chapter 3 Phil Piechowski provides a concise definition of performance appraisal and urges supervisors to view the appraisal process as an opportunity to support staff in developing self-confidence and strengthening their skills. He describes three methods of evaluating school social workers' performance and proposes best practices for supervisors in the performance appraisal process.

Don Bramschreiber and Al Flieder bring a wealth of experience to the discussion of program evaluation in chapter 4. The chapter includes useful practical information about planning and implementing program evaluation activities and the identification of best practices with a strong emphasis on the use of program evaluation as a method of program improvement and development.

In chapter 5 Marlys Staudt and Catherine Alter present practical strategies for school social workers to utilize in evaluating their practice. This information is both useful and timely in light of the ever increasing emphasis on demonstrating service outcomes. The single system design approach presented in this chapter will be particularly useful to supervisors in supporting school social workers' efforts to improve the effectiveness of their practice and to demonstrate the outcomes of their services.

Many AEA school social work programs serve as practicum sites for social work graduate students. In chapter 6 Roberta Kraft-Abrahamson and Dea Ellen Epley Birtwistle provide a comprehensive and much needed discussion of best practices in supervising practicum students with an emphasis on developing collaborative efforts between the practicum agency and the school of social work.

The aspects of school social work program supervision selected for discussion in this book are not exhaustive. The identification of best practices in other areas of program supervision are certainly needed and would be a welcome addition to this work. This presentation of best practices is intended to support the efforts of school social work program supervisors and practitioners in their continued striving to provide the best possible services for Iowa's schools, families and communities.

Chapter 1

Best Practices in the Recruitment and Selection of School Social Work Personnel

James P. Clark

This chapter stresses the importance of the recruitment and selection process and includes a discussion of trends and other factors affecting recruitment and selection efforts that must be considered by program supervisors in developing a systematic approach to hiring high quality practitioners. Current practices are described and steps in the recruitment and selection process are identified and discussed. The chapter concludes with proposals for best practices for supervisors.

The recruitment and selection of school social work personnel is one of the most critical tasks to be performed by the school social work program supervisor. Indeed as Ewalt (1991) points out, "The single most important characteristic of a human services agency is the quality of its personnel" (p. 214). Skilled school social work practitioners are the key to accomplishing the goals and objectives of the school social work program and to realizing the mission of the employing agency.

Discussion of recruitment and selection procedures is essentially absent from the school social work literature. A review of school social work journals and books published in the last decade found no treatment of this topic. Recruitment and selection of social work personnel, however, is discussed elsewhere in the social work literature as it pertains to other human service agencies or to the profession in general (Ewalt, 1991; Fernandez, 1990; Pecora, 1991).

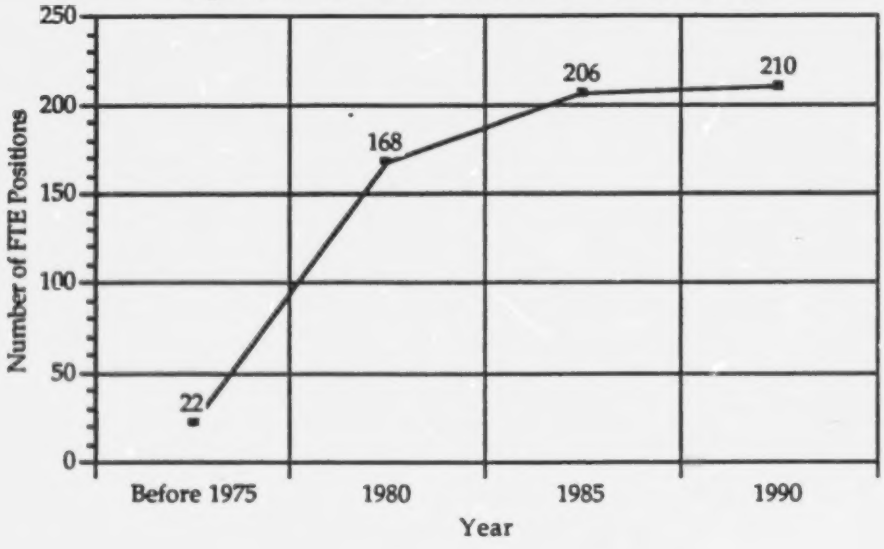
Growth and Development of School Social Work in Iowa

Although school social workers have been employed in Iowa since the 1920s, the most significant growth in services occurred during the period of 1975-1980. This dramatic increase was precipitated by two significant events - the enactment of Public Law 94-142, The Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 and the creation of 15 area education agencies (AEAs) through Chapter 273 of the 1975 Code of Iowa. Inclusion of school social work in the definitions of related service in the federal law supported the development of school social work programs in AEA Special Education Divisions and approximately 180 full time equivalent (FTE) school social work positions were added to AEA support service programs during this five year period (Clark, 1989a).

Figure 1 illustrates the growth of school social work FTE positions over the past 20 years (Iowa Department of Education, 1980, 1985, 1990). While the significant growth period was between 1975-1980, there has been essentially no expansion of services since 1980.

Recruitment of school social work personnel was a major activity of program supervisors during the 1975-1980 period of expansion; however, the more recent focus of recruitment efforts has been primarily on maintaining skilled staff at current levels by filling positions vacated by retirement or resignations.

Figure 1. Growth in School Social Work FTE Positions



Factors Affecting Recruitment

It is critical that school social work program supervisors recognize the many factors that can influence the success or failure of recruitment efforts. These factors must be considered in developing an effective recruitment strategy.

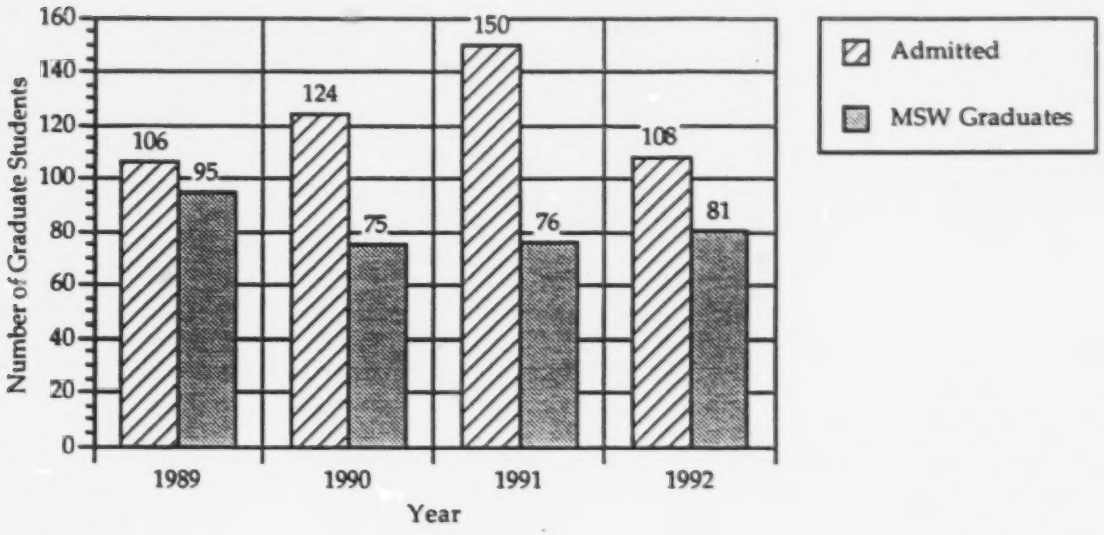
The rural nature of Iowa presents a considerable challenge to program supervisors recruiting school social work personnel. In differentiating rural and urban school systems in a national study, Helge (1984) found that recruitment and retention of special education professionals was a more serious problem in rural schools. Difficulties recruiting and retaining personnel were found to be "related to low salaries, social and professional isolation, lack of career ladders, long distances to travel, and conservatism of rural communities" (p. 299). These characteristics, to a great extent, match the working conditions of many Iowa special educators including school social workers. These conditions present a considerable challenge for the AEA school social work program supervisor attempting to recruit personnel for rural work assignments.

In discussing national trends affecting recruitment and retention of social work staff, Ewalt (1991) has pointed out that the supply of professional social workers will likely increase in the immediate future as a result of increased enrollments in graduate schools of social work. However, a longer range outlook suggests that there may be a

reduction in the availability of professional social workers due to declining birth rates and the effects of increased competition for skilled personnel among human service agencies.

While Iowa has experienced some increase in the number of students admitted to the University of Iowa Graduate School of Social Work in the previous three years, the number of students graduating from the program has declined from the level it was in 1989 as illustrated in Figure 2 (Powell, 1992). This is especially significant since 59% of the state's school social workers have graduated from this program (Clark, 1989b). A long range recruitment plan should consider these national and state trends affecting the supply of professional social workers, and might include the development of strategies for improving the agency and the school social work program in ways that will serve to attract and retain highly skilled social work practitioners.

Figure 2. Graduate Students Admitted and Earning MSW degree at University of Iowa School of Social Work 1989–1992



A number of changes in the labor force will continue to effect social work recruitment efforts, e.g., the increased number of women who are career oriented, those who come to the social work profession as a result of mid-life career change, and increased numbers of ethnic minorities entering the profession (Ewalt, 1991). Women with a career orientation will be attracted to agencies that offer opportunities for advancement, creativity, increasing pay and professional development. In addition, as Fernandez (1992) has pointed out, the increased number of women in the work force should prompt agencies to consider the development of "family sensitive" policies such as maternal and paternal leave, child care, flex time, etc. as a means of recruiting personnel.

Because of their prior experience in the work force, those who come to the social work profession as a result of mid-life career change will require satisfactory working conditions and may be quite critical of agency operations. In addition, the increasing numbers of ethnic minorities offers the opportunity to enrich the diversity of professional staff and to reexamine management styles and service delivery in ways that are responsive and sensitive to cultural diversity.

Single source funding, i.e., AEA special education support service budgets, is another factor which has had significant influence on the growth of school social work services over time. However, over the past 10 years AEA support service budgets have not grown at the rate needed to maintain existing personnel at a time when demands for services have expanded. As a result, in order to maintain quality, many school social work programs have prioritized services by focusing on more narrowly defined client groups and particular types of services, e.g., intervention with students who are behaviorally disordered.

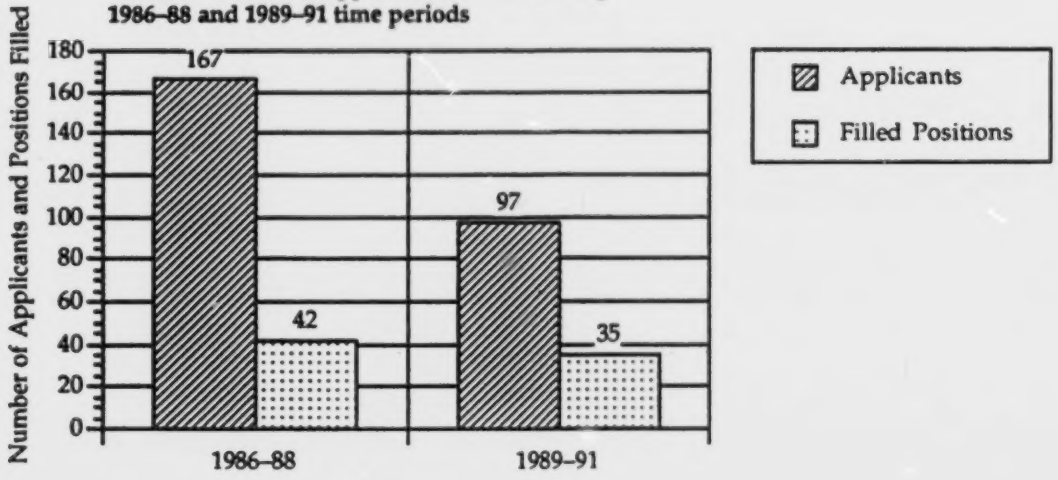
Standards for school social work licensure in Iowa were recently revised and became effective on October 1, 1988. The inclusion of an approved program for school social work practice within the graduate curriculum as per these new requirements marks a trend in the direction of more specialized preservice preparation of school social workers (Clark, 1987). It is difficult to determine at this time whether these new requirements will have negative or positive effects on recruitment of school social work personnel; however, recent surveys of AEA school social work program supervisors indicate there has been a decline in the number of qualified job applicants for positions recruited for since the new standards have been in place.

Figure 3 illustrates the relationship between positions for which school social work program supervisors successfully recruited school social workers (filled positions) and the qualified applicant pool that was available before and after the enactment of revised licensure standards in 1988 (Clark, 1989c). Filled positions represent the total number of vacant positions during these time periods, i.e., all vacant positions were filled.

While the qualified applicant pool appears to be shrinking slightly, school social work programs still appear to be relatively successful in filling vacant positions when compared to other Iowa social agencies. A recent University of Iowa study of family service, mental health and health care agencies in Iowa found that agency directors were only able to fill 52% of vacant positions for which an MSW degree was required (University of Iowa School of Social Work, 1992).

These numerous trends and factors influencing recruitment present a complex set of challenges to the program supervisor attempting to recruit school social work practitioners. While all the variables at work in these influences are certainly not under the direct control of the supervisor, a comprehensive and strategic recruitment plan should consider these factors and include consideration of variables that may be within the scope of influence of the agency.

Figure 3. Total filled school social work positions and total number of applicants in AEAs during 1986–88 and 1989–91 time periods



Current Recruitment Practices

A variety of recruitment strategies are used by Iowa school social work program supervisors. Publications such as newspapers that have statewide distribution are routinely utilized as well as advertisements in professional publications such as the "Iowa Update," newsletter of the Iowa Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW); and the "NASW News," the national newspaper published monthly by NASW. Direct contact with schools of social work, particularly at the University of Iowa, is common. Informal and personal contacts at professional conferences are also utilized to stimulate interest in vacant positions.

The state of Iowa has identified special education personnel recruitment and retention as a key component of its Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) process as required by federal regulations (34 CFR §§300.380 - 300.387). Included in the CSPD plans to ensure an adequate supply of qualified special education support service personnel is the coordination of a job clearinghouse for school social work (Iowa Department of Education, 1992, p. 86). The clearinghouse provides a systematic and efficient procedure for linking social workers seeking employment with program supervisors who are recruiting. Applicants contacting the State Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education clearinghouse are provided information about vacancies in the state, licensure requirements, and how to contact AEA program supervisors who are currently seeking applicants.

The Recruitment and Selection Process

Pecora (1991) has identified the following five major steps in the recruitment and selection process:

1. Develop a job description.
2. Recruit applicants.
3. Screen applicants.
4. Conduct screening interviews.
5. Select the applicant and offer the position. (p. 118)

These steps provide a structure for the recruitment and selection process, helping to organize the efforts of supervisors and other agency administrators who may be involved in this process. An effective approach should incorporate each of these essential steps. Each step will be discussed and used as a basis for identifying best practices.

All Iowa AEA school social work programs have existing job descriptions in place. These job descriptions should be reviewed to ensure that they concisely define tasks that are required for the position, and clearly identify the knowledge, skills and abilities that are essential to performing these tasks. As Kadushin (1992) has stressed, supervisors have a vital contribution to make to the recruitment and selection process because they are "in the best position to know the details of the job that needs to be done and the attitudes, skills, and knowledge required to do it" (p. 47).

While job descriptions will vary and be specific to the design of each school social work program as well as each agency in which the program operates, they should generally include knowledge, skills and abilities that are fundamental to school social work practice. The earlier research of Allen-Meares (1974) analyzing school social work tasks has been recently updated and used as the basis for development of the school social work subtest of the National Teachers Exam. Results of the job analysis used in development of the test are reported by Nelson (1990) and are a helpful reference in identifying knowledge, skills and abilities that are commonly expected of entry level school social work practitioners. Another approach to developing job descriptions for school social workers in special education has been proposed by Crouch (1981) who has related each job task to specific federal special education regulations.

Once a task specific job description is in place, recruitment activities can begin. Pecora (1991) stresses that recruitment activities should be viewed as a form of public relations. The manner in which the recruitment activities are carried out will either enhance or damage the image of the agency. This is not only an important consideration for the individual who is ultimately selected for the position but is perhaps even more important for those who are not selected. If the recruitment process is well organized and applicants are treated professionally and with respect, even if they are not selected they will likely convey a positive view of the agency to others in the community.

A position announcement should be developed to be used in advertising the vacancy in publications described earlier. The announcement should contain clearly stated essential details of the job based on the job description, and should conform to affirmative action guidelines and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission rules. In addition to describing the essential duties of the job, the announcement should also include information about the starting date, application procedures, and the deadline for applications.

Screening applicants usually includes a preliminary review of written application materials followed by screening interviews for those whose written materials meet minimum requirements. The preliminary "paper" screening is often conducted by a small committee of agency administrators, the program supervisor and selected members of the staff. Pecora (1991) has developed a "screening grid" which summarizes essential information from written applications and assists the screening committee in efficiently identifying applicants to be interviewed.

The purposes of the screening interview are: (a) to select applicants who best meet the job requirements, (b) to develop good public relations (as discussed above), and (c) to educate applicants about the position and agency expectations (Pecora, 1991, p. 130). In addressing these purposes, the screening interview should focus on two basic questions: (a) Can the applicants do the job? and (b) Will the applicants do the job? (Pecora, 1991, p. 131). The first question addresses the *ability* of the applicant to perform the job by examining their previous work, education and training, and interview behavior. The second question addresses the applicant's *willingness* to perform the job. Interviewers should explore the applicant's interest in and enthusiasm for the work required, attitudes toward the working conditions, e.g., travel, office space, hours, etc., and the applicant's career goals.

Screening interviews are often conducted by a committee and may even involve the same members of the screening committee. The committee must plan the interview procedure including the development of a standard set of questions that each interviewee will be asked. Timelines for the interview should be established and a chairperson with responsibility for leading the interview should be identified. A systematic procedure for evaluating responses to structured interview questions must be developed to add objectivity to the final selection decision.

When the final selection decision is made the person selected is often offered the position by the supervisor over the phone. If the candidate accepts the offer a written letter of confirmation from the supervisor usually follows. The supervisor concludes the selection process by notifying other applicants in writing.

These steps in the recruitment and selection process must be thoughtfully planned and carried out in an organized and systematic fashion so as to ensure that the best possible social workers are selected.

Best Practices

The following best practices are based on the preceding discussion and are proposed for school social work supervisors involved with the recruitment and selection process.

School social work program supervisors should have primary responsibility for the development and implementation of the recruitment and selection process. Within the agency, school social work supervisors are in the best position to coordinate this process as they have specific knowledge about the practice of school social work and are knowledgeable about the professional networks and publications that are utilized in recruiting applicants. Also, if supervisors are to have responsibility for accomplishing

school social work program goals and objectives, and managing the contribution of the school social work program toward realizing the agency's mission, they must be in a position to ensure that personnel are employed who have skills consistent with these directions.

The recruitment and selection process should be described in a written plan. This plan should be sanctioned by the agency administration and supported by the school social work staff. The plan should be developed with the input of school social work staff and agency administrators, particularly the director of human resources, and should include a provision for periodic review and revision in response to changing agency needs and work force trends. The review and revision procedure should also prompt consideration of modifications in agency policies, procedures or other operations that might be made to create a more attractive work place for applicants.

School social work job descriptions should concisely and clearly define job tasks that are required for the position. It is imperative that applicants have a precise understanding of the job tasks. Job descriptions should be periodically reviewed and revised if necessary to ensure they convey a clear and current description of what is expected on the job.

Job announcements should be detailed, clearly written, and should be consistent with affirmative action guidelines and Equal Opportunity Employment Commission laws and regulations. A detailed and descriptive job announcement enables potential applicants to immediately assess their interest in the position. The job announcement should be widely distributed so as to maximize the number of qualified applicants for the position.

Written application materials should be designed to obtain essential information about the applicant and should include data that facilitates the "paper screening" process. Thoughtfully developed application materials will provide useful information for the screening process. Written materials must be designed to be consistent with affirmative action guidelines and Equal Opportunity Employment Commission laws and regulations.

A systematic preliminary "paper screening" should be developed to facilitate the efficient selection of applicants who meet minimum requirements and who will then be invited for an interview. This procedure might be developed by a screening committee and could include the use of a "screening grid" such as that proposed by Pecora (1991).

Screening interviews should be conducted by a selection committee chaired by the school social work program supervisor. The committee should include at least one school social work practitioner and key agency administrators including the director of human resources. A standard set of structured questions should be developed for use in the interview to provide for objectivity and continuity across multiple interviews.

The selection decision should be made by the school social work program supervisor based on recommendations from members of the selection committee. While the participation of other agency administrators is extremely valuable in various

recruitment and selection activities, it is the program supervisor who has primary administrative responsibility for the school social work program and who is ultimately accountable for its accomplishments.

Although there may not be a perfect match between current recruitment and selection practices and the best practices proposed here, it is important that best practices be articulated and that agencies and program supervisors continually strive to implement these practices to ensure that the best possible school social workers are employed. The best services to Iowa children and families can only be provided by the best school social work practitioners.

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Chapter 2

Best Practices in Planning and Implementing School Social Work Staff Development Programs

Charlene Struckman

This chapter describes current practices of school social work supervisors in the development of inservice training in Iowa. A review of the literature on staff development is presented which describes the types of inservice training that can be offered and identifies those approaches that have been regarded as best practices. Based upon this literature and current practice in Iowa, best practices for school social work supervisors in the development of inservice programming are proposed.

Inservice staff development programs are vital to the future of school social work practice. Ongoing training is needed for school social workers to effectively provide services to schools, students and their families. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) has set national professional standards for social work services in schools (NASW, 1992). Standard 18 states that, "School social workers shall develop skills for effective service to children, families, personnel of the local education agency, and the community" (p. 12). Standard 20 states that, "School social workers shall assume responsibility for their own continued professional development" (p. 13). These mandates for quality school social work services further emphasize the need for staff development.

Although staff come from high quality preservice Master of Social Work programs, only entry level skills can be developed in the time allotted to preservice training (Hynd, Pielstick & Schakel, 1981). Competence is developed over time through the crucible of experience. Staff development programs enable school social workers to reflect upon that experience, utilizing it to develop new, more effective practices.

In addition, many of the skills required in school social work are idiosyncratic to education or to a particular agency (Reid, Parsons, & Green, 1989). Many of the skills listed in NASW national standards are unique to education (NASW, 1992). Therefore, staff need training to prepare them to adapt traditional social work practice to a school setting. Particularly in the first several years on the job, staff must learn a great deal about education in order to function effectively in schools.

Professional advances in social work and education also require ongoing training in order for staff to keep their skills up-to-date. It has been estimated that the half-life of knowledge and skills in the helping professions is five to eight years (Hynd, Pielstick & Schakel, 1981). After a number of years on the job all professionals, including school social workers, are prone to demotivation, a loss of enthusiasm and a leveling off of job performance (Evens, 1989). As school social work staff reach midcareer, special

attention needs to be given to the motivational aspects that may affect current job performance as well as the acquisition of new skills.

For school social workers, changes may come from advances in social work practice or from the major structural changes that are taking place in education. An example of a change in education that affects school social workers is the Renewed Service Delivery System, a special education reform initiative that is taking place in most AEAs in Iowa. These changes affect the entire system of special and regular education. The result is that all roles in regular and special education are in flux. School social workers, as well as other educators, need training in order to accommodate these changes.

While some of the inservice training provided for school social workers in Iowa may come from AEAs, local school districts, and professional organizations, it is important that the social work supervisor provide leadership and be involved in the majority of staff training (Reid, Parsons & Green, 1989). Nearly all aspects of effective supervisory practice include educational activities in order to help staff provide appropriate and effective services to children and their families (Austin, 1981). The creation of a dynamic staff development program is therefore one of the supervisor's most challenging tasks.

The role of the supervisor is important because it promotes competence in the targeted work skills and facilitates the effective management of staff performance. It also insures that the supervisor is in a position to carry out necessary procedures to help staff apply and maintain newly acquired skills. Finally, the involvement of the supervisor helps impress upon the staff the importance of the skills being taught and the value of their participation in the training (Reid, Parsons & Green, 1989).

Current Practice

Current staff development activities vary widely across the state of Iowa. In general, however, school social work supervisors are typically involved in planning and providing inservice training. They often perform this function in conjunction with other supervisors within the agency. Much of the inservice provided to school social workers in Iowa is with other disciplines. However, in most cases at least a part of the inservice program is for school social workers only.

Some agencies share inservice programs with outside agencies. This increases the base of financial resources needed to bring in high quality, nationally known presenters. It also increases the good feelings and cooperation between agencies that share a similar mission.

The amount of inservice varies from one to two days in some agencies to eight or more in others. Programs are usually provided within the AEA during normal working hours. However, some are provided in other community sites or in local school buildings. At least one AEA provides paid inservice time that can be completed in the evenings and on weekends.

Inservice presentations are often provided by outside specialists. However, they are also presented by agency staff who have developed expertise in a particular area. Often agencies send staff persons to conferences or state Department of Education sponsored meetings to gain skills that they can share with the rest of the staff when they return.

Due to the need for financial efficiency most inservice programming is provided in a large group situation. However, at least one AEA in Iowa is experimenting with intensive small group training.

In many AEAs opportunities for inservice training are being provided through mentoring relationships and peer consultation. Group work projects in several AEAs utilized a group peer consultation format that brought small groups of school social workers together to share practice experiences and to receive and provide feedback from peers.

All school social work supervisors engage in either formal or informal methods of need assessment. This process enables staff to participate in deciding what kind of training is needed.

Providing quality inservice programming is an extremely important component of the school social work supervisor's role. Therefore, its inclusion in this publication is vital. What follows is a review of the literature about inservice training with a synthesis of best practice approaches for school social work supervisors in developing training for staff.

Literature Review

Types of Inservice Training. Korinek, Schmid and McAdams (1985) describe several basic types of inservice training. The first, "information transmission," is intended to increase the knowledge of a specific group. Usually, information is verbally presented through a lecture, demonstration or panel discussion in a classroom-like setting. There is usually only a minimal amount of audience participation. Sessions usually last three hours or less. This type of training is set up like the traditional school classroom. However, just as the trend in education is away from self-contained class settings to cooperative and collaborative models, so staff training in business and education has increasingly moved to incorporate these principles (Barnett, 1990; Chrisco, 1989; Duke, 1990; Glatthorn, 1990; Raney & Robbins, 1989).

Verbal instruction can also occur on an individual basis or within a small group. An opportunity for an ongoing question-and-answer process enhances the individualization of the training based on specific staff needs. However, there are limitations to verbal instruction especially when teaching performance skills. Being able to discuss and understand the requirements of a skill does not insure that an individual will be able to perform it (Reid, Parsons & Green, 1989; Lambert, 1989; Strong et al., 1990).

Another popular way to transmit information is through written instruction. This can be presented in a variety of formats including self-instructional manuals, commercially

available books, published papers and memos to staff (Reid, Parsons & Green, 1989; Austin, 1981). Written instruction has a number of advantages. It eliminates the need for a trainer, and it can provide a permanent referent for staff. However, professionally published materials may be too general to be of value. Also, there is no opportunity for clarification and/or discussion. Finally, written materials are only effective if they are actually read.

The second type of inservice is "skill acquisition" which is intended to strengthen existing skills or to develop new ones. This type of inservice may be scheduled over several days in a series of sessions and may demand active rather than passive involvement of participants (Korinek, Schmid & McAdams, 1985). This type of training may provide performance modeling (Reid, Parsons & Green, 1989). Performance modeling can be achieved through a simulated demonstration in the training session. This may involve role playing or the use of videotaped materials. However, it can also occur on the job through shadowing which involves peer observation (Barnett, 1990).

An advantage of performance modeling is that it is easier for staff to comprehend what must be done, and if the demonstrator has to adapt to unanticipated environmental events, the staff can see how that adjustment is made. Disadvantages may include finding trainers who are comfortable modeling skills or not having the technical ability to provide filmed or videotaped situations.

In "skill acquisition" opportunities for performance practice may also be provided. Performance practice involves the trainee rehearsing the targeted skill (Reid, Parsons & Green, 1989). The performance practice may occur in an actual or simulated work environment. Performance practice enables the trainer to see whether the trainee has learned the targeted work skill. It also gives the staff person confidence in his or her ability to implement the procedure being trained. Among the disadvantages are the need for small groups and the discomfort staff may feel about demonstrating the skill in front of the trainer or peers. In addition, the fact that a skill has been acquired does not necessarily mean that it will be performed on the job (Korinek, Schmid & McAdams, 1985; Showers, 1982, 1984, 1989, 1990; Joyce, 1990).

The third type of inservice, "behavior change," involves transferring the newly learned skills to the work situation. It may utilize components from the first two types. However, this type of training is more likely to occur in the job situation and to involve active participation through performance modeling and performance practice. This type of training is more costly, time consuming and requires the most commitment from all concerned (Showers, 1984, 1989, 1990; Joyce, 1990).

Joyce and Showers (1988) have extensively researched the issue of behavior change or implementation in the area of teacher inservice. They discovered that when the theory of a curriculum or strategy was adequately explained, and there was an opportunity to see multiple demonstrations and to participate in practice in the training situation, almost all teachers developed sufficient skill to enable classroom practice of the new techniques. However, often the new skills failed to become a permanent part of the teacher's skill repertoire. Unlike earlier researchers, Joyce and Showers felt that the teacher's failure to transfer the new skills was due to characteristics of the work place rather than personality characteristics of the teacher (Showers, 1990).

They developed a new component to staff development activities that would continue long after the intensive training was over and that would increase the chances of implementation. They developed a "coaching" follow-up training program that organized teachers into self-help teams that shared analysis of existing curricula in search of appropriate situations to utilize the new strategies. In addition, they had the opportunity to watch their colleagues teach using the new strategies. The researchers hypothesized that given the isolation in which most classroom teachers work, providing opportunities for substantive collegial interaction would provide the thoughtful integration needed to actually use the new knowledge (Showers, 1990). This hypothesis was confirmed. Eighty percent of the coached teachers implemented the new strategies as compared with only 10% of the uncoached teachers (Showers, 1982, 1984). In addition, substantial improvements in student learning were achieved. The number of students passing their grade based on district requirements rose from 34% to 72% at the end of the first project year and to 95% at the end of the second project year (Showers, 1990).

This effort produced a new ideal paradigm: presentation of a theory, demonstration of a skill, protected practice, feedback and coaching (Lambert, 1989). Even though research about adult learning showed that many repetitions were needed to learn a new skill and that direct instruction alone was ineffective, the preferred methods of staff development have remained passive (Lambert, 1989). Joyce and Showers' (1988) "coaching" concept emphasizes active involvement. That involvement includes participants talking about their own thinking and teaching, initiating change in the school environment, contributing to the knowledge base, and sharing in the leadership of the school (Showers, 1990). Duke (1990) also emphasizes the importance of a context of support that would provide caring, concerned colleagues who could give a variety of viewpoints.

This concept of "empowerment" to motivate and energize staff occurs throughout the staff development literature in both education and business (Foster, 1990; Joyce, 1990; Kizilos, 1990; Lambert, 1989; Miles & Seashore, 1990; Showers, 1990; Simpson, 1990). This emphasis on empowerment mandates significant changes in the climate of the workplace.

Simpson (1990) describes significant aspects of the culture sustaining change in DeKeyser Elementary School. These include sharing and collegiality, empowerment and leadership. Collegiality included regular time and structures for joint planning. Empowerment involved the addition of concerns based staff meetings where teachers could confront important issues. From these meetings have evolved joint expectations about important issues like teacher evaluations. The leadership style was committed to partnership and nurturance.

According to Joyce (1990), those aspects of school climate that facilitate the transfer of new skills include self-determination, supportive administration, a high degree of internal communication, time and opportunity to observe others, and the expectation that everyone will make a contribution.

Best Practices. Several efforts to review the literature in order to develop a best practices framework for staff development have been attempted (Hutson, 1981; Korinek, Schmid & McAdams, 1985).

Inservice programs should be explicitly supported by administrators (Hutson, 1981; Korinek, Schmid & McAdams, 1985; Chrisco, 1989). Commitment is needed from administrators at all levels to legitimize, coordinate and recognize the efforts of participants. Their support is particularly critical when behavior change is planned so that they can advocate for the resources and time needed to achieve those changes.

Rewards and reinforcement play an important role in staff development programs (Korinek, Schmid & McAdams, 1985). According to Hutson (1981), intrinsic professional rewards are more effective than extrinsic rewards such as released time or extra pay. Intrinsic rewards may mean new responsibilities or public recognition. It is also important to eliminate disincentives such as inconvenient scheduling or poor facilities. Commitment is further enhanced if participation is voluntary.

Participants should be fully involved in helping to plan the goals and activities of inservice training. This may be accomplished through formal or informal needs assessments. The more involved participants are the greater their sense of ownership and the greater their commitment to change (Korinek, Schmid & McAdams, 1985; Sinclair, 1987).

The goals and objectives of the inservice program should be clear and specific and in harmony with the overall direction of the agency or department (Hutson, 1981; Korinek, Schmid & McAdams, 1985). Activities that are part of a general effort of the organization are more effective than "single shot" presentations (Hutson, 1981).

Evaluation should be built into each inservice. The evaluation should be a collaborative effort aimed at planning and implementing programs (Hutson, 1981; Sinclair, 1987). Evaluation formats that ask how the skills learned will apply to the participants' job and what further topics related to this one should be addressed are needed.

Professional growth activities should include the local development of materials within a framework of collaborative planning by participants (Hutson, 1981). The idea is to avoid "reinventing the wheel" by modifying and adjusting new strategies to current practice.

Inservice trainers should be competent (Hutson, 1981). Research indicates that the staff themselves or other practitioners are more successful trainers than are administrators or university professors.

The process of inservice education should model good teaching through active learning, the use of self-instructional methods, allowing freedom of choice, utilizing demonstrations, supervised trials and feedback (Hutson, 1981).

Inservice education should follow a developmental rather than a deficit model (Hutson, 1981). Those being inserviced should be viewed as competent professionals

who are participating in growth activities to become stronger. These existing strengths should be emphasized.

Staff Development Best Practices for School Social Work Supervisors

Based upon a review of the literature and current practices of inservice programming for school social workers, a number of best practices can be formulated.

The school social work supervisor should collaboratively plan and participate fully in inservice programming with staff. Collaboration may be achieved through informal discussions, committee work or formal needs assessments. However, collaboration implies more than simply choosing among proposed topics. Staff should be involved in planning the amount of training needed, the goals of the training, the selection of materials and presenters, and the creation of a plan for implementation.

Rewards and reinforcement should be an integral part of the staff development program. The emphasis should be on intrinsic rewards such as new responsibilities, opportunities for leadership or public recognition. Extrinsic rewards such as released time or extra pay may also be utilized, but should not be presumed to insure staff commitment.

The goals of the staff development program should be clear and in harmony with the overall direction of the agency. Under optimal conditions, staff throughout the agency will be meaningfully involved in setting the agency's course.

The format for staff development should be based on the theory, demonstration, practice, coaching model (Joyce & Showers, 1988). This would indicate a combination of types of inservice including *information transmission, skill acquisition and behavioral change*. Providing staff opportunities to work in small study teams where current practice is articulated and discussed with a view to integrate new approaches optimally exemplifies this approach.

Staff development programs should demonstrate good social work practice. Good social work practice energizes clients and empowers them to take charge of their lives. The best staff development program would empower school social workers to utilize their skill and knowledge to reshape practice as new conditions dictate. The underlying principle in this approach is respect for the skills and experience that the staff already possesses rather than a preoccupation with presumed deficits.

Inservice programs should be explicitly supported by AEA administrators as well as affected local school administrators. Therefore, school social work supervisors must collaborate with appropriate administrators to secure their support.

School social work staff should be directly involved in the development and presentation of inservice programs. While outside consultants can be effectively and strategically used, the knowledge and skills of the staff themselves should be tapped to develop material and present information.

Considerations for the Future

In many AEAs the movement towards the types of staff development suggested here is already well underway. School social work supervisors have already creatively utilized their meager funds designated for staff development, state grant funds and Phase III money to provide high quality staff training programs. Coordination with other AEAs or other community agencies has also increased the total resources available to provide quality training. Supervisors have utilized small group process, mentoring, case consultation, as well as verbal presentations, written material and video taped programs to provide training at all three levels: knowledge, skill development and behavior change.

However, the true empowerment of staff in most AEAs is still a goal recognized more with intention than with action. Among the constraints are agency requirements, discipline rivalry, and a lack of time for planning.

Many changes are taking place in education through a variety of reform efforts. For school social workers to continue to meaningfully contribute to education, staff development is more important than ever before. School social workers must be empowered to take charge of their practice within changing school situations. They must learn to work together with each other and with other disciplines to provide the high quality of services to children and their families that have characterized school social work practice in the past.

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Chapter 3

Best Practices in School Social Work Performance Appraisal

Phil Piechowski

Performance appraisal is a process and a set of procedures which aids the supervisor in determining the job proficiency of employees. This article describes three methods of performance appraisal in general use by school social work supervisors. The use of observation, scripting, and coaching as tools for improving the evaluation process is reviewed; the use of self-assessment is discussed; and best practices are proposed.

The process of evaluating employee performance is identified by many different names: performance review, performance evaluation and merit rating. The label used in this article is performance appraisal.

Performance appraisal serves several different functions. Cherrington (1987) identifies five organizational functions:

1. a guide to personnel actions including hiring, firing and promoting
2. rewarding employees
3. personal development
4. guarding employee training needs
5. integration of human resource planning

Radin (1980) states that the appraisal process for school social workers needs to include assessments regarding the worker's effectiveness as a provider of services and as a member of an organization. Muchinsky (1987) adds research as an important function of the appraisal process. Information gained in the appraisal process is useful in validating personnel selection and training procedures. Other authors cite system change as an outcome of performance appraisal (McGreal, 1983). Through the appraisal process ways to change work environments for the benefit of the employee and students may be identified.

There is general agreement as to the justification and functions of performance appraisal. Why, then, does performance appraisal continue to be a controversial and disruptive issue in many organizations? Often it is not the concepts involved in appraisal which cause the controversy, but it is the manner in which the appraisal process is carried out. This chapter will examine both the concepts of performance appraisal and methods for conducting the appraisal process with the hope that a better understanding of appraisal concepts and procedures will lead to a more effective and harmonious appraisal process.

Relevant Performance Appraisal Models for School Social Workers

Several models of performance appraisal are in general use by school social work supervisors. These include evaluating school social workers as providers of service and members of an organization, goal-setting, and clinical experience.

Evaluation of Practitioners as Providers of Service and Members of a System (Radin Model)

School social workers have two sets of relationships within which to function. One is with clients, and the other with colleagues as a part of an organizational structure. Each of these functions, therefore, needs to be evaluated (Radin, 1980).

Evaluating Practitioners as Providers of Service. In this model, the school social worker first starts with goals for clients, then establishes objectives. Two areas which need to be included are criteria for determining effectiveness and modalities or tools for assessing the outcomes of the activities. Three criteria for success are: (a) improved feelings and attitudes of clients, (b) improved views of significant others about clients, and (c) indices of competent social functioning. Seven modalities are identified by which to determine success: (a) hard data or objective reports of events, (b) tests, (c) observation of behaviors, (d) rating scales, (e) questionnaires, (f) interviews, and (g) self-reports. The modalities selected are based upon the theoretical orientation of the practitioners, the available resources and the client's preference.

Evaluating Practitioners as Members of a System. The school social worker's performance as a member of an organization are evaluated assessing the degree to which the worker has met the expectation of others. To accomplish this task, expectations held by others must be specifically stated. Examples of expectations might include: the number of referrals and caseload, adequacy of Individualized Educational Plans (I.E.P.) and other paperwork, and general work habits. Evaluation modalities to determine the worker's accomplishments include hard data, i.e., caseloads, rating scales, questionnaires, and interviews.

Goal-Setting Model (McGreal,1983)

The goal-setting model emphasizes an individual approach to performance appraisal, similar to the I.E.P. process used in special education. The fundamental belief of the goal-setting model is the assumption that the clearer the social worker knows what needs to be accomplished, the better. Goal setting develops professional growth through correcting employee weaknesses and rewarding employee assets, sets explicit criteria, focuses on professional growth, and ties together the employee's individual goals with the department and agency's mission.

The steps undertaken in the goal-setting process are:

Step 1 • *Social worker's self-evaluation* which includes the identification of improvement areas or expected outcomes.

Step 2 • *Social worker's drafted contract*. The contract lists the goals to be accomplished, review procedures and expected outcomes.

Step 3 • *Social worker/supervisor conference*. At this point in the process, the employee and supervisor reach agreement on the specifics of the employee contract.

Step 4 • *Progress monitoring*. Direct observation by the supervisor is integral to this step in the process.

Step 5 • *Assessment of outcomes*. During the completion of the appraisal process, the outcomes are documented, and future areas of improvement are identified which will be included in the next evaluation cycle.

The most important step in the goal-setting process is the social worker/supervisor conference during which agreement is reached on expected outcomes. This conference offers both the social worker and the supervisor the formal opportunity to tie together the social worker's job expectations with department and agency goals and to talk about ways of improving service delivery to students, schools and families. Throughout the goal-setting process, continuous communication is required between the social worker and supervisor concerning the agreed upon goals and methods for reaching the expected outcomes.

Clinical Supervision Model (McGreal, 1983)

This model of performance appraisal requires a close and intense professional relationship between the social worker and the supervisor. The emphasis in this relationship is on collegial rather than authoritarian orientation. In some respects, this model is more of a supervisory model than an evaluation model.

The guiding principles of the Clinical Supervision Model are:

1. Social work is a complex set of activities that require careful analysis.
2. Social workers are reasonably competent professionals who can be appraised through collegial means.
3. Supervisors can aid the social worker through analyzing techniques.
4. Supervisors need to be responsive to the worker's desire to improve skills.

The steps to conducting effective clinical supervision are:

Step 1 • *Pre-observation conference*. The purpose of the conference is to review, in a relaxed manner, selected cases which will be observed and to establish rapport between the supervisor and social worker.

Step 2 • *Observation*. This step is basic to the Clinical Supervision Model. Notes taken during the observations should be descriptive rather than evaluative.

Step 3 • *Feedback conference.* It is at this point that the social worker analyzes what is happening during the observation, and the supervisor simply assists in clarifying interactions represented by the data.

The Clinical Supervision Model works only when the social worker is self-directed and the supervisor and social worker can interact in a constructive manner. McGreal (1983) points out that this model is as much a philosophy as it is an evaluation process. The Clinical Supervision Model could be used within a comprehensive evaluation system, but in and of itself, it is not an appropriate comprehensive employee appraisal model.

The Use of Observation, Scripting and Coaching In Performance Appraisal

Hunter and Russell (undated) emphasize the importance of scripting and coaching as part of performance appraisal. McGreal (1983) has written extensively on improving observation skills which allows for more accurate evaluations. If performance appraisal is to include staff development as an outcome; observation, scripting, and coaching must be an integral part of the evaluative process.

School social work activities are complex functions which include many dynamics. ***The key to effective observation is to narrowly focus the observation.*** The supervisor needs to consult with the staff person prior to the observation so that a specific focus of the observation can be agreed upon. The intent of the observation is to assist the social worker in improving the quality of their work and not the quantity of work.

Scripting is a useful tool in the observation process for both the supervisor and the social worker. Scripting has been described by many authors, but most notably by Hunter and Russell (undated). Scripting is a pen and pad activity of writing down what the person being observed says and the reaction of the client. Alternative methods are audio tapes and video taping the observation. The purpose of scripting is to record enough of what is said or done to enable the observer to "play back" the event. Through this process, the social worker and supervisor can review the content of the observation and discuss potential alternative strategies for dealing with presenting issues. Hunter and Russell (undated, p. 17) have identified the following techniques for effective scripting.

Coaching is a natural outcome of the observation and scripting process in the employee appraisal process. Through effective utilization of coaching, the supervisor is able to help the staff member understand what was done during the observation period, why it worked, and how to generalize the interaction to future situations. The observer helps to couple the episodic events occurring during the observation to reinforceable skills. For example, a student in a group session may have revealed an important life event which was impacting negatively on their educational performance. The observer, through the scripting process, would play back the event as it unfolded to the social worker. The observer may then inquire of the social worker, *"You are very sophisticated in conducting groups. Do you have any clues as to what triggered the student revealing this information today?"*

•	
	a. Write in the middle 3/4 of the page leaving
	margins for notes.
	b. Develop a set of abbreviations for the types
	of observations generally conducted.
	c. Record mostly nouns and verbs.
	d. If scriptor gets lost make a double line
	and pick up interactions at that point.
•	
	e. Use parentheses to bracket non-verbal action.
	f. If observation is in a group setting, the scriptor
	may need to diagram the location of students
	and other important room details.
	g. When recording non-verbal behavior, record what
	people did and not how you interpret their behavior.
	h. Do not become involved in the activity being
•	completed by the person being observed.

According to Hunter and Russell (undated), scripting and coaching helps to identify and analyze successful practices, identify causes of student behavior and encourage good employees to continue growing. The more the social worker is rewarded for their competencies during the evaluative process, the more rapidly growth will occur.

Judging Data

Judgmental data are usually used in most performance appraisals which typically include supervisor ratings of employee performance. Additionally, some organizations utilize self-assessments and peer assessments. The advantages to providing rating data is for the clarification of how the employee's competencies are viewed through graphical ratings. The most common scales may have a range of from three to five ratings with a scale similar to the one below:

Muchinsky (1987) highlights several common rating errors which stem from rater bias and inaccurate perceptions. The first is **leniency error** which can result in lighter to liberal ratings on two conservative ratings. This error in rating is usually the result of the rater applying personal standards based upon their own personality or experiences. The second type of error is **halo error**. These errors can be either positive or negative and result because the rater's judgment is based on their *feeling* toward the employee. **Central tendency errors** result when the rater is unwilling to assign extreme, either high or low, ratings. This typically happens when raters are asked to respond to areas in which they are not familiar.

One way to compensate for the above mentioned errors in judgment are to establish specific criteria for employee performance standards. Recent *advances* in rating scales include the use of behaviors as the criteria upon which to base the ratings. Behaviors are less vague than many other types of criteria. A means of establishing the expected behaviors is to have a group of practicing school social workers designate the areas to be evaluated and expected behaviors for each of the areas. This can be a time consuming method but well worth the effort.

Self-Appraisal

Although most research has been completed on evaluations made by supervisors, self-appraisal can provide worthwhile information in the appraisal process. Muchinsky (1987) reports that despite the tendency toward leniency in the ratings by the employee, there are fewer halo errors with self-appraisal. It does appear that people recognize their strengths and weaknesses and accurately identify them. An off-shoot of self-appraisal is peer review which incorporates a team of peers offering suggestions to the service providers regarding ways to best achieve stated objectives (Weiner, 1982). Ultimately, however, in the self-appraisal process, the employee is asked to rate their own performance.

Self-appraisal generally utilizes a rating system in which the employee is asked to rate specific behaviors. The employee and supervisor then confer to discuss the employee's self-perceptions relative to the areas rated.

Typical questions asked in the self-appraisal process include:

1. What have been your major achievements as they relate to established expectations?

2. What are the most important assets you bring to the job you are currently performing?

3. What skills would help you perform your job even better or contribute to your professional growth?

4. What specific actions could you take to develop these skills?

5. What specific actions could your supervisor take to help you develop these skills?

Best Practices

The following best practices apply to school social workers' performance appraisal.

School social workers need to be involved in establishing the areas to be appraised. Most job descriptions list all conceivable responsibilities an employee is likely to perform on the job. Only a few of these responsibilities make a significant difference regarding outcomes to clients. Those areas which are deemed to be most important in the delivery of services should be included in the appraisal process. Feedback regarding less significant variables can occur more informally and at periodic intervals.

School social workers need to assist in the development of criteria which defines the areas to be appraised. Generally, these will be stated in behavioral terms. Specific criteria for judging performance is often inadequate in the employee appraisal process. When specific criteria are lacking, evaluation results are communicated as vague inferences regarding the employee's capabilities. Employees deserve and desire to know what attributes they possess. Generally, when these are stated in behavioral terms, the employee will know exactly what the supervisor deems as valuable and important.

As a part of the evaluation process, the social worker to be evaluated and the supervisor will establish agreed upon goals for the evaluation. Mutually agreed upon goals will enhance the relationship between the supervisor and the employee being evaluated. This is particularly true when the clinical/supervising model is used as a part of the evaluative process. Prior agreement regarding goals of the evaluation will also aid in communication between the supervisor and employee and result in a sense of professional accomplishment on the part of the employee.

Observations, scripting, and coaching will be used in the evaluation process. The utilization of these techniques will aid the supervisor in providing the employee with specific and observable data. Through this process, the supervisor and employee can identify specific areas of competence and those areas which need improvement.

Rating scales will be utilized to record outcomes. Through the use of rating scales, employees have a visual description of how their performance is viewed by the supervisor. This aids in measuring progress toward attainment of agreed upon goals and aids in more clearly identifying those employees who are exemplary and those who are marginal or inadequate.

Self-assessment will be implemented as an integral part of the appraisal process. Understanding how employees view their own job performance is an important piece of information for the supervisor. Generally, employees have accurate perceptions of their performance. Most often supervisors and employees are in agreement with each other's perceptions of performance. When differences occur, the supervisor and employee have a mutual responsibility to explore the dimensions of their differing perceptions. Often, good employees rate themselves lower than their supervisors. When this occurs, the supervisor has the opportunity to reinforce the employee's competencies and help the employee attain greater self-esteem.

Performance appraisal will focus on maintaining or increasing the employee's self-concept and will reward outstanding performance. Through the appraisal process, the supervisor has an opportunity to formally acknowledge employee competencies. At a minimum, the evaluation process needs to protect the employee's self-concept, even those employees who need to improve their performance. If possible, the evaluation process should increase the employee's sense of professional self-worth, through praise, specific feedback, and tangible rewards.

Conclusions

The appraisal process is more than evaluating job performance. The process needs to incorporate activities which strengthen staff members' skills and self-confidence to perform a very demanding and complex job. Future performance appraisals need to rely heavily upon mutual goal setting between the supervisor and school social worker, and direct observation utilizing scripting and employee self-appraisal. Some supervisors may wish to add clinical supervision to the process as an aid to developing a collegial relationship with the person being evaluated. Ultimately, the appraisal process should benefit the employee and the agency through the identification of mutually acceptable goals which support and are congruent with the agency's mission.

Performance appraisal will also play a greater role in determining staff development activities. During the process of goal setting, observation, and self-assessment, employee and agency weaknesses or areas needing strengthening will be more clearly identified. The supervisor must utilize this important information in establishing innovative staff development activities which will maintain the exemplary competencies of Iowa school social workers.

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Chapter 4

Best Practices in Evaluating School Social Work Programs

Donald Bramschreiber
and
Al Flieder

Program evaluation is addressed from the perspective of the program supervisor or other management personnel responsible for services delivered by a group of school social workers working as a defined program within an education agency. Relevant literature and recent best practices are cited. The thrust of this chapter is to assist supervisors in applying program evaluation as a method of program improvement and development.

School social work programs benefit from the thoughtful application of formal program evaluations. Implemented on a periodic basis they can meaningfully assist in a program's healthy evolution. There are principles and techniques, developed through experience, which can facilitate this process, leading to more effective outcomes. Achieving desired results from this type of undertaking depends upon numerous variables including pre-planning, clarity of purpose, stakeholder involvement and scheduled follow through.

This chapter will address program evaluation from the perspective of the program supervisor or other management personnel responsible for school social work services. Although some information may be useful for the evaluation of an individual's practice, the thrust of this material is directed at assisting management personnel in applying *program* evaluation as a method of *program* improvement and development. Program evaluation in this sense is defined as the systematic, planned evaluation of the cumulative school social work services provided by the integrated practice of two or more certified school social work practitioners employed by an education agency.

There is no single best way to evaluate a school social work program. Creativity, thoughtfulness, and persistence are important ingredients in planning and implementing a thorough process.

Perhaps the most vital component of a successful experience is the development of a strong plan. Central to the plan must be a clear understanding of purpose and utilization of results. Purposes may range from an internal desire to ascertain how services and/or their effectiveness are perceived, to public awareness and education, to meeting demands that data substantiate the continuance of the program as required by governing boards or legislative bodies. Improved efficiency, effectiveness or economy of programming and service delivery are central to the purpose. In any case, it is imperative that those designing the program evaluation agree on what the true

purpose is and then plan accordingly. Flieder (1988) has provided more information on the history and rationale behind program evaluation.

Developing A Plan

Initial considerations. Several considerations must be taken into account when initiating program evaluation planning activities. Once the purpose has been clearly established by that person(s) desiring the program evaluation, several issues become a reality. What information is needed? What are the best sources of this information? What methods of data collection will be used? How will the information be analyzed and applied? With whom will the data be shared? How much time, effort, material and money will be required to successfully complete the plan?

What information is needed? The purpose of the program evaluation is the central guide for determining the question(s) to be answered. Each question should be relevant to the purpose and each question should be stated in a manner to maximize reliability and validity. Trends over recent years have been in the direction of more qualitative data (McLaughlin, 1988), as well as greater focus and selectivity in data gathering, i.e., we should only gather data to the extent which it can actually be utilized (Patton, 1986).

Consideration for the type of data must be addressed. For example, if numerical comparisons are thought to be a desirable outcome for data analysis, then information gathering and retrieval must be planned with that in mind.

What sources of information are available? Depending upon the purpose of the program evaluation, a variety of information may be readily available. Agency and/or student records contain data which may be helpful. When these records are used, appropriate permission from the agency and/or families must be obtained prior to its inclusion in the program evaluation.

Colleagues, education personnel, parents, and students are other sources of information and may provide perspectives which would contribute much to providing insight in answering the questions posed within the program evaluation.

Who are preferred respondents? A respondent is a person who provides information in response to an inquiry about the program which is to be evaluated. Their responses may be based on observations and/or experiences relative to the questions being asked. Literally, anyone might be considered as a possibility. However, respondents who are most knowledgeable about the program provide the most credible data. If the program evaluation plan calls for conclusions regarding consumer satisfaction with school social work services, then it follows that clients might be the best, most credible source of that information. Ideally, respondents should not be limited to participants in the program itself, but also include others knowledgeable about those aspects of the program subject to evaluation.

What methods of data collection will be used? There are many options worth considering as data collection is being planned. Interviews, both structured and unstructured, can be effective. However, if comparative data is required, then some structure needs to be in place for this purpose. Personal interviewing is very

productive, but time consuming and expensive. Scheduling of appointments for this activity may require great persistence to allow for the most effective use of the interviewer's time.

An alternative to face-to-face interviewing is telephone interviewing. Again, a choice of open-ended questioning versus structured data collection is an issue. This means of interviewing obviously requires telephones and, perhaps, a budget to accommodate long distance charges. Experience has shown this to be an effective and productive method of gathering data.

Questionnaires and surveys are alternatives to personal interviews. It cannot be stressed enough that care and planning need to go into the wording which is used so that the results will yield the information being sought. However, once a reliable instrument has been created, it can be distributed to a much larger group of respondents or a variety of types of respondents. Depending upon the needs of the program evaluation, a second or third opportunity to respond (e.g. , in the form of follow-up mailing) may be necessary. If so, timelines need to be established. A return rate of 40% - 60% for a brief questionnaire can be achieved with relative ease. Advance notice and follow-up contacts will maximize return rates.

Since the use of opinion polls and questionnaires has flourished so widely over the past 20-30 years, evaluators are cautioned to be sensitive to the audiences being surveyed. The saturation of the public by pollsters can have a negative backlash on respondents' willingness to complete and return questionnaires. Designing a concise, easy to complete format and obtaining sanction through proper channels can greatly enhance the value and volume of results. Attempting other more qualitative means of data gathering may be advisable.

In preparing structured interview questions or written questionnaires, several issues must be considered. The reliability and the validity of the instrument are important. If the data are to be used for comparison purposes, structure provided through forced choices (multiple choices, rating scales, etc.) is desirable. If numerical computations are sought, then rating scales, sequential data, etc., are possibly the most effective means to that end. If, on the other hand, quotable quotes are the desired outcome as a means of communicating the results of the program evaluation, then an open-ended, unstructured approach may be of great benefit. Some comparison can be made through the unstructured, open-ended approach particularly when obvious groupings are apparent in organizing the data.

Focus groups have been assembled more frequently in recent years as another method of qualitative data gathering. A focus group is a small homogeneous group of 7 to 9 people knowledgeable about the program being evaluated (i.e., elementary school principals who have agreed to meet for the purpose of discussing the program). A facilitator stimulates open discussion about the program by asking open-ended questions (i.e., "What has been your experience with the school social work program? What makes it effective? How could it be better?"). A recorder captures verbatim comments that result. Part of the data recorded is the number of participants, their job title(s), and number of respondents who may agree with comments offered to the group. Advantages of the focus group technique include the opportunity for consumers

to interact face-to-face with program personnel or other stakeholders and the synergy created by one person building on the ideas of another.

How will the data be analyzed? If the program evaluation plan calls for information to be gathered from many respondents or sources, it is advisable to consider numerical data which fit into predetermined categories. In so doing, the data are much more easily managed and can provide a wealth of information. With the advent of the personal computer, data analysis can be managed through available software designed to serve as data bases or spread sheets. Statistical analysis software is also readily available and helpful to complete the study of the data. Some software programs have a variety of ways in which the data can be presented. Analysis of the data may need to be carefully planned to take advantage of the capability of the software to be used. For example, if graphs are desired as a means of displaying the information gathered, planning for data input in the appropriate manner is a necessity.

If computer technology is not available, hand tallies and other analyses can occur effectively, but more time and effort may be required.

How will the data be used? Certainly this question relates directly to the purpose of the program evaluation. The purpose will indicate the audiences for whom the data need to be presented. If the intent is to substantiate a need for a change in program direction or services, then the data may need to be presented to the administrative team assigned with the responsibility to implement those changes. If the intent is to provide feedback to school social workers as to how the program is perceived by local school district personnel, then sharing of information may take on a much different appearance. In any case, the data should be studied and understood well enough to report concisely the conclusions drawn from the program evaluation.

What are the timing considerations of data gathering? To achieve the multiple benefits of gathering data from varied sources through varied methods, the matter of timing, or sequencing must be considered. That is, the passage of time can be an intervening variable which itself can confound the drawing of conclusions as data sources are compared. Since program conditions change over time, it is desirable to minimize the passage of time between data gathering activities, especially if data is compared between sources and/or methods. It is recommended to gather all data within a three month period of time; less is desirable.

Additionally, program evaluators must consider the interaction of factors such as workload cycles, school calendars, vacation periods and the general availability of respondents to participate in the evaluation process. A judicious balance needs to be achieved between the need for evaluation data and minimizing the disruption to service provision.

What will program evaluation cost? "Can we afford to do it?" is a frequent consideration in any program evaluation. The antithesis is, however; ***"Can we afford not to do it?"*** With careful planning, an inexpensive program evaluation design can be created without impairing the effectiveness and the successful outcome of the evaluation experience. Too often, monetary and time considerations limit the size and the thoroughness of a program evaluation effort. If not properly budgeted, the program

evaluation experience will be a less positive one. That is not to say that substantial resources must be available at the onset of such a project, only that there is no substitute for adequate resources and pre-planning. As a frame of reference, large scale health and mental health programs federally funded include 1-3% of program budget for evaluation (Flieder, 1988).

Staff time is another important cost consideration. Program evaluations should be ideally scheduled when the staff is motivated and has time and energy to assume this task. Money for on-site team evaluators (honoraria expenses, travel, etc.), printing, telephone usage, data analysis, postage and secretarial support are among the possible costs.

On-site team evaluators? Sometimes it is beneficial and efficient to use persons not employed by the program being evaluated to assist in the planning, collection and analysis of the data. On-site evaluators may be employed or "borrowed" as a means of performing special services related to the program evaluation. These services may include: (a) interviewing, (b) analyzing data, (c) preparing written and/or oral reports, (d) consulting, and/or (e) assisting in on-going program development.

The use of persons not directly a part of the program being evaluated in addition to stakeholders lends credibility, objectivity, and fresh viewpoints.

The selection of program evaluators outside of the program or agency should consider school social work experience, a willingness to accomplish the designated tasks and personal credibility, and integrity. Candidates for this activity may include colleagues from other agencies/programs or people affiliated with professional organizations, professional program evaluators and college/university personnel. Occasionally, it may be helpful to engage experts from other disciplines to participate in this process, depending upon the nature of the evaluation and the tasks assigned to the outside evaluators. In general, good evaluator credentials lend more credibility and objectivity to the results of the evaluation effort. Many times an in-kind exchange can be arranged between programs wishing to accomplish similar activities.

Implementation: A Six Step Model

1. **Planning and design**
   Formulating the need, purpose and paradigm of the program evaluation.

2. **Self-assessment**
   This phase of the program evaluation experience may involve identifying staff concerns which relate to their perception of the strengths and weaknesses of the program in which they work. Frequently, this effort is intentionally designed to be more open-ended and free of predetermined ideas. . . in other words, "How do we think we're doing?" Related to this phase of the evaluation process may be the analysis of data available through the program's ongoing data collection system. If the data collection system includes information regarding staff effectiveness (outcomes), this data may provide some insight into the quality of services offered. Cross comparison of opinions between respondent groups can be achieved by presenting identical questions to each.

3. **Consumer satisfaction**
The development of surveys, polls, or questionnaires are methods of gathering quantities of data from samples of various informant groups. Depending upon the group, mailing or hand delivering may be an effective means of distribution. Within the school setting, students can be asked to take parent/family questionnaires home for their completion though experience has shown this method to be less effective. Plans may be made for a second or a third opportunity for completion, particularly if the initial response is low. Follow-up may need to include another copy of the questionnaire for the sake of convenience.

The focus group method of data collection as described earlier can be adapted for any or all of the components of self-assessment, on-site team or consumer satisfaction. It is probably most relevant to the latter.

4. **On-site team evaluators**
A team of evaluators who are not employed by the program provide an opportunity to enhance the program evaluation process. The team needs to meet, get organized, and develop a plan of action for the time spent on-site. This should be done in concert with the program supervisor or appropriate administrative personnel. Interviewing is probably one of the most useful services which the on-site team can provide. Since the interviewing process may be time consuming, care should be exercised in defining the purpose of the interview and specifying exactly the content and use of the data to be collected. Telephone interviewing may be one means of being more time efficient and reaching a larger population. In-house interviews are also served well through this process. Directors of special education, chief administrators, other special education personnel, etc., may contribute to the desired information data base. Important to the efficiency of this method is whether the respondents have prior notification that they may be contacted, the name(s) of the on-site evaluator(s) and the approximate time the contact will be attempted. On-site evaluators may also wish to facilitate focus groups.

5. **Analysis and reporting of findings**
Analysis and reporting are also critical steps which need to reflect the purpose and readership of the program evaluation report. Several versions of the final report may need to be adapted to various decision makers or other audiences. A two page executive summary would usually be advised.

6. **Metaevaluation**
The entire evaluation process should be evaluated with learnings recorded for the benefit of the next program evaluation cycle.

Best Practices

Programs should be evaluated regularly. (NASW, 1992, p. 2) Program evaluations serve as a benchmark in progress toward fulfillment of mission. They measure the extent a program is accomplishing what it is intended to do and are useful in adjusting mission or the path toward it. A comprehensive program evaluation every five years is

a good rule of thumb. During rapidly changing times, more frequent evaluation or partial evaluation may be desirable.

The supervisor of school social work should provide leadership in planning, coordinating and implementing the school social work program evaluation. As the central person responsible for the program and its overall operation and direction, it is the supervisor who would find greatest application of results.

All stakeholder groups are represented and involved in the design of the evaluation. Persons who are affected by the program and its services should be participants in the planning and implementation of the evaluation.

Data gathering is limited to that which can be feasibly utilized. It is tempting to gather more data that can be analyzed and utilized "just to make sure." It is inappropriate to gather excess data and could be considered a misuse of program resources to do so; though evaluators must also assure that there is sufficient data to answer evaluation needs. There may also be circumstances where data is gathered from a respondent group in an attempt to make them feel included, or for some extraneous motive. Such practices are damaging to the credibility of the evaluation and will obfuscate the results.

Data is gathered from multiple sources through multiple methods and allows for comparisons among data components. This practice enhances the validity of data collection efforts and can prevent unanticipated events from interfering with a singular approach to data collection.

Sampling techniques are chosen so as to optimize the ability to establish generalizations. This includes randomization and consideration of levels of confidence in selecting sample sizes. (See Appendix B).

Respondent groups are clearly informed that their participation is optional and not intended to affect current service delivery. It is imperative that respondent groups are not subjected to practices which may lead to feelings of intimidation or that a refusal to cooperate might lead to a reduction in services. Any communication regarding efforts to gather data must project fairness and an attitude of appreciation for the respondents' time and efforts.

Program staff are made aware, in advance, of the purposes of the evaluation, including whether the evaluation is to be summative or formative. Program staff should be included in the initial phases of planning for a program evaluation. This practice assists in clearly communicating the intent, purpose and relationship of the program evaluation to the overall program. It also will define the nature of the evaluation and the anticipated meaning that the results might have for individual staff members. A summative evaluation focuses on program continuation or discontinuation whereas a formative evaluation addresses program modification/improvement.

Purposes for the program evaluation are expressed to the staff in such a way that the process can be a growth opportunity, not a source of uncertainty, anxiety or fear. This engages staff members in a positive orientation, resulting in a more accurate, successful outcome.

Every attempt is made to keep program evaluation independent (separate) from personnel evaluation. Although a program evaluation may include elements of data collection which could parallel information used in personnel evaluations, it is imperative that these evaluations not be blended. A program evaluation must focus on perceptions regarding the totality of the program and not on any one individual's contribution to that effort.

The primary purpose of a program evaluation is to review the program. Staff members must receive assurance that data collection efforts will be planned and implemented accordingly.

Results of the program evaluation are made available to all program staff, stakeholders and decision makers. If conclusions drawn from the data are not deliberately shared, opportunities for change, growth, or reinforcement may be lost. Inclusion in the sharing process helps persons to feel involved and to experience a sense of ownership for the good as well as for any deficiencies noted in the evaluation report. Truth in sharing may assist in bonding the staff together, in working toward common goals or in enhancing a sense of identity with an agency.

If program evaluation is viewed as a process which is ongoing or reoccurring, then subsequent efforts may be affected either positively or negatively by the manner in which this sharing of the results of current program evaluation was conducted.

All underlying assumptions are stated along with interpretations and, recommendations resulting from data analysis. Expression of these factors assists the evaluator(s) in remaining cognizant of them. It also greatly assists in present and future interpretations.

Professional and organizational ethics are upheld throughout the process. Ethical standards, agency rules, or professional values are never violated in conducting a program evaluation.

A metaevaluation is accomplished at the conclusion of the process. The evaluation process itself should be evaluated.

Summary and Conclusions

As national, state, and local initiatives and goals increase expectations on school social work staff and supervisors to apply declining resources more effectively and efficiently, program evaluation is one method which can greatly assist in charting the path toward successful accomplishment of mission. We have endeavored to present a sequence of pragmatic, experience-based, contemporary considerations in devising and executing program evaluation to achieve this. It can assist supervisors and the programs they are responsible for in the evolution of school social work as a service that continues to meet essential needs of students, parents, and school personnel into the 21st century.

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Appendix B

Suggested Sample Sizes for Selected Population Sizes in a Simple Random Sample*

5% Confidence Level

Total Number in Population	Number Needed in Sample	Number Needed in Population	Total Number in Sample
100	80	600	240
120	92	700	255
140	104	800	267
160	114	900	277
180	124	1,000	286
200	133	1,250	303
220	142	1,500	316
240	150	1,750	326
260	158	2,000	333
280	165	2,500	345
300	171	3,000	353
320	178	3,500	359
340	184	4,000	364
360	189	4,500	367
380	195	5,000	370
400	200	6,000	375
420	205	7,000	378
440	210	8,000	381
460	214	9,000	383
480	218	10,000	385
500	222	More than 10,000	400

NOTE: 100% of the random sample *must* respond in order to generalize to the total population with a .05 confidence level.

*Source "The Community Survey," Iowa State University, Extension Division.

Chapter 5

Best Practices in School Social Work Practice Evaluation

Marlys Staudt
and
Catherine Alter

This paper discusses how school social workers can evaluate their practice on a regular basis without the additional expenditure of significant time or cost. The components of single system design research are described. The paper concludes with an extended practice example, using a single system design to evaluate the intervention, and a list of best practices.

Practice evaluation is increasingly a necessity in the social work profession. This is evidenced by a growing social work literature on evaluation, an intensified emphasis on research curriculum in schools of social work, and by the Council on Social Work Education's recent accreditation standard on the integration of research and practice. These trends result from the profession's need to be accountable to clients, organizations, and communities, and from the necessity to earn full professional status among other helping professions. Both of these pressures require social workers to study their interventions and to document what does and does not work.

Evaluation of practice can be difficult in some fields of social work. For some practitioners, clients are resistive and/or inaccessible. For others, interventions are very brief and/or follow-up impossible. A child welfare worker, e.g., who wants to assess the effect of the intervention often finds that abusive families do not cooperate when the social worker seeks to observe family functioning as an outcome measure. Likewise, a medical social worker cannot evaluate how a patient is functioning after discharge without the expenditure of considerable resources.

School social workers, on the other hand, have a number of advantages when conducting practice evaluation. First, they have an accessible and often willing client population. They work at the interface between home, school, and community and therefore have many opportunities to collect data. School encompasses a significant portion of a child's life, and school social workers have access to many aspects of a child's development, education, and family life.

Second, school social workers are skilled at intervention planning. Because the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires an I.E.P. for each student enrolled in special education, they routinely write intervention goals and objectives in measurable terms. School social workers are accustomed to describing intervention outcomes in ways that are measurable and verifiable, and they can, therefore, produce first rate practice evaluation without extraordinary expenditures of time and effort.

Third, school social workers have a built-in client information system, making it unnecessary for them personally to collect data for evaluation purposes. They have access to a wide range of quantitative and qualitative data on students' behavioral and academic performance. For example, a social worker receiving a referral of a student for non-attendance can easily access a record of past attendance in the central file. Assuming the student stays in the same system, she can track that student's change in attendance from pre-intervention to post-intervention by means of information that is routinely collected and centrally stored. In short, school social workers have available student records that provide a history of past performance (a baseline), as well as the means to document future performance after intervention (an outcome).

The purpose of this article is to suggest methods by which school social workers can capitalize on these advantages in designing and implementing self-assessment processes. They can assess their practice on a day-to-day basis without extraordinary effort, using the school's many client populations as research targets, data collection systems already in place, and case plans already done. As these individual, small scale studies accumulate, knowledge about professional social practice in schools will be greatly enhanced.

The balance of this paper describes "single system design" as a useful method for doing practice evaluation. Within this context, school social workers' ready access to a wide variety of client populations, evaluation plans, and data collection systems is noted. The paper concludes with an extended illustration of a practice evaluation that provides the practitioner/researcher with new knowledge about intervention effectiveness.

Practice Evaluation Using Single System Design

Like other professions, social work has discovered a family of research designs that can be used to document what works so that others can benefit from this knowledge (Alter & Evens, 1990). These designs are collectively known as single subject or single system designs, because they examine a single individual or client system (family, small group, department, organization, network, etc.) at a time.

Single system designs are more useful than group designs for doing intervention evaluation because they focus on only one client and measure change over time. Traditionally, social workers have evaluated their interventions by simultaneously studying large numbers of clients, measuring one or more indicators of change before and after an intervention. After gathering this data, they computed the difference between the pre-post and post-scores, averaged these "difference scores," and then found the "average" score. This average score was considered to be an index of group change, and thus a measure of program effect.

Single system approaches, by contrast, are a repeated assessment of a single client over time. In single system designs, client change is measured many times (there may be three or more times when data is collected). This allows the practitioner to study one client in an *intensive* manner over time, and enables him or her to discover individual patterns of change. The advantage of using repeated measures of one client,

rather than a limited number of measures of many clients, is that individual differences among clients can be easily detected. Any social worker trying to improve his or her practice skill is, in effect, learning to adapt a particular intervention to a particular client in a particular context.

School social workers are certainly interested in their effect on specific students, teachers, administrators, families, or community systems of organizations; they are usually not interested in the probability that change will occur in a certain group of individuals. For example, a group study might show a statistically significant reduction (let us say 10%) in violence among adolescent males in grades 7 through 9. Although significant, this statistic does not tell a specific social worker whether a specific intervention with a specific teenager has had a specific desired effect. Only by studying individual interventions can we begin to assess the differential effects of our work with individual clients or client systems. As noted above, school social workers have access to a wide range of client populations.

Client Populations in Schools

The overall goal of school social work practice is to enhance children's functioning in school through amelioration of social and behavioral difficulties. This goal is accomplished by means of interventions aimed at several different system levels—the individual student, parents and/or the family, the peer group, the classroom, the school, the school district, the community, and even the state. It was noted above that one advantage in doing evaluation in the schools is that social workers have an accessible and often willing range of populations with which to work. However, this availability of so many targets of interventions is a complicating factor. We therefore list below the two principal "units of intervention" encountered by social workers in schools.

Individuals as the Unit of Intervention. While there has been recent focus on the need for school social workers to move beyond traditional work with individual children and develop interventions for target groups of students, Brown (1982) notes that individual counseling is still the effective intervention for student difficulties not directly involving others; i.e., test anxiety or poor study habits. Behavioral management strategies are also directed toward individual students. While the cooperation and involvement of others are necessary for the effective implementation of these interventions, outcomes are measured by change in the behavior of the individual student. Work with individuals has always been, and is still, a focus of the school social worker.

Most school social workers do not have the luxury of doing intensive counseling with individual families. Nevertheless, they often work with a parent by providing information and referrals to other agencies. They bridge the gap between home and school by explaining to parents the special education referral and assessment process, and by encouraging parent participation in this process. In short, their main role with individual parents within the school setting is that of liaison between home, school, and community.

School social workers often consult with individual teachers and other school personnel, providing information about and understanding of students' behavior, and offering advice on methods to change students' behavior. It needs to be understood that, although the results of consultation are intended to affect whole classrooms of children or even whole schools, the target of the intervention is an individual teacher or administrator.

Groups as the Unit of Intervention. School social workers often work with groups of students who have social skills deficits or who have experienced personal crisis such as divorce or death (Schmitz, 1989; Schreier & Kalter, 1990). In addition, they may work with groups of parents who are dealing with specific issues, although recent studies indicate that parent groups are not regularly or frequently offered by school social workers (Kurtz & Barth, 1989; Staudt, 1991).

School social workers also work with groups of teachers, offering inservice training or workshops on a variety of topics. Graber (1990) describes working with a group of teachers to examine and clarify the negative labels and words often used to describe children with school difficulties. School social workers also work with groups of school personnel to plan and develop new programs to meet student needs (Landress, 1983).

While developing community programs is not a frequently performed service of school social work departments, it is well within the role expectations of school social workers. There are many difficulties inherent in the delivery of services to multi-problem children, not the least of which is the lack of interagency cooperation and coordination. In an effort to improve the overall effectiveness of services to emotionally or behaviorally disturbed children, social workers often work with groups of agencies to forge working agreements and means of monitoring intervention progress across all involved organizations. Armstrong (1982) discusses multi-agency interventions that establish linkages among agencies and form coalitions to meet the needs of children with disabilities. Staudt (1987) discusses the use of the rural school as a base from which to develop community programs.

The purpose of discussing groups in this paper is to underscore the idea that, although numerous individuals may be involved, the unit of intervention is still a single entity and thus the focus for the evaluation. When groups, rather than individuals, are the unit of intervention, then information has to be collected from the individuals in the group and aggregated to the group level. This does not change the fact, however, that it is a single group that is being evaluated by means of repeated measures.

Case Planning in Schools

School interventions, whether with individuals or groups, usually have clear and unambiguous goals. This characteristic of school social work is a great benefit to evaluators because in its most general form the evaluation question is, *"Is the intervention goal being achieved?"* Putting this question another way, we say that the start of any good evaluation is a good case plan.

When you the evaluator have identified the individual target of the intervention evaluation and the goal(s) of the case plan, then it is time to decide what you will observe and what you will measure to determine whether or not the client's goal(s) have been achieved. Oddly enough, this thing being measured is called the "indicator." Indicators of intervention outcomes can be a client's behavior, feeling, attitude, or physical condition. For example, below is a sample list of goals and useful indicators for interventions at the individual level.

Individual Interventions

Goal	Indicator
Reduce a student's depression.	Number of times student cries or laughs each day.
Reduce a student's risk of sexual assault.	Student's score on a test covering the content of a curriculum concerning the sexual abuse.
Increase a student's sensitivity to and tolerance of cultural and racial differences.	Student's attitude as expressed on a scale measuring cultural and racial bigotry.
Increase the amount of supervision given a child by his or her parent.	Number of days per week child is late for school.
Empower a student's parents to advocate for her or her needs.	Degree to which parents are able to overcome bureaucratic barriers to service as indicated by the number and frequency with which the child gets the services that he or she needs.
Improve a teacher's ability to assess social and emotional needs of special education students.	Number of times a teacher requests consultation for a child with social or emotional problems.

Data Collection in Schools

Each of the behaviors, attitudes, or feelings listed above must be measured if it is to be an indicator of success (or failure). In doing practice evaluations in schools, there are many ways of measuring and collecting information—many sources and instruments for capturing information. Radin (1979) offers seven modalities: hard data, tests, observations, rating scales, questionnaires, interviews, and self-reports. This list has been condensed into four modalities, and described below with brief discussions of advantages and disadvantages.

Educational Files. Each student's file contains the hard data and test scores to which Radin refers. The file includes the student's attendance record, grades, standardized test scores, disciplinary infractions, and records of parent-teacher conferences. The advantage of using this data are its accessibility and objectivity, as well as its ability to provide a running description of the child through his or her school career. One can easily compare attendance and grades from year to year. A disadvantage is that school

records are not always complete. Further, the file usually provides information on the child's functioning in only one context—that of the structured school setting.

Observation. Behavioral observation is widely used in the school setting by school social workers and other support disciplines (Nelles Moon, 1987; Messmer, 1982). The prime advantage is that the practitioner can see first hand how the child functions in the natural setting of school or home. However, the very act of observing can change the child's behavior or the way the teacher interacts with the child in the presence of the observer. Also, unless you have the time to do multiple observations in different situations, then you will not obtain a valid picture of the child's behavior.

Self-reports and Interviews. Interviews and self-reports should not be overlooked as useful measures in practice evaluation. Interviews are a natural tool for social workers, and obtaining reports from clients on their perception of progress occurs on a regular basis, even if a research design is not in place. For the purpose of evaluation, a structure needs to be built into the interview to insure that from week to week the same behaviors or attitudes are being measured. In addition, the amount of change needs to be tracked. In short, you must determine before hand the specific information you need in order to determine if progress has occurred, and you need to develop a means of recording this information.

Rating Scales. Included in this category are rating scales, questionnaires, sociograms, and other structured or semistructured ways to gather information via paper and pencil. School and home behavior, self-concept, adaptive behavior, social skills, and peer relationships can all be measured with instruments that are currently on the market. Edleson (1985), e.g., discusses the advantages of rapid-assessment instruments. These instruments are short and easy to score, and items may serve as a take-off point in working with the client—thus they are tools for practice as well as evaluation. If used appropriately, and interpreted in light of other available information, scales provide a good deal of objectivity and validity. Further still, standardized scales that have been tested on large populations of students provide assessment of your student compared to many others of the same age and gender.

As with other measurement tools, there are disadvantages in using scales. The reading level of the child and parent needs to be considered. The practitioner also needs to be alert for reactivity; the very act of completing the scale can cause improvement in the client's behavior or attitude. In other words, it may be that client change is the result of repeated use and exposure to the scale itself, rather than an effect of the intervention.

When you cannot locate a scale that measures the indicator you wish to observe, or when the goal is so idiosyncratic or specific that you know better than to spend time looking—create your own scale! Social workers in many settings now use Goal Attainment Scaling (Pietrzak, Ramler, Renner, Ford, & Gilbert, 1990) as a means of measuring change when no simple behavioral observations are available. With practice, social work practitioners have written scales that are innovative and useful, and that are adopted across their organizations as a way of routinely monitoring client change (Alter & Evens, 1990).

Putting It All Together

Before starting a practice evaluation, practitioners should review the decisions they have made and put them together into a conceptual whole. This is called the evaluation design. These are the questions to ask yourself:

1. What is my unit of intervention and, thus, the target of my evaluation? (An individual or group?)
2. What is the goal of my intervention?
3. How will I measure whether the goal has been achieved? What are my indicators? What is my measuring device (instrument, behavior checklist, structured interview schedule, scale, GAS form)?
4. From whom/what will I collect the necessary data?
5. How many times will I collect this data?

There are instances when this list of questions must be modified because a single intervention has more than one goal. Given this situation, a "multiple baseline" design is often called for in school social work practice. Measurements can then be taken on two or more different behaviors or across two or more settings. Harris (1981) gives an example where a goal attainment scale is used to measure progress on 11 different goals; a different scale was developed for each goal. While many of the goals in her example pertained to school, some related to out-of-school activities. This is not to say that a single baseline design is inappropriate for school social work practice. The nature of the referral and the goals of the worker and client always determine what type of design to use. A brief description of each follows.

Single Baseline. In a single baseline design one indicator is chosen for measurement, and measures are taken on that indicator *before* the intervention starts to obtain a reliable picture of the seriousness of the problem. For example, take an intervention meant to reduce test anxiety. A student is scoring lower on tests than ability warrants. Record of the student's past test scores provide a baseline from the last quarter or semester. The school social worker introduces individual counseling, including training in relaxation and cognitive restructuring. After the intervention is introduced, the school social worker continues to gather data on the student's test performance. While it cannot be shown that improvement in the student's test scores were due directly to the school social work intervention, an aggregation of many similar single baseline studies—if they show improvement in student test scores—will allow us to form hypotheses about the effectiveness of a particular intervention. Controlled scientific designs are often not possible in practice, thus the usefulness of this design should not be underestimated.

Multiple Baseline. As stated earlier, students referred to school social workers usually present more than one referral concern. In this case, baselines can be obtained for two or more behaviors; e.g., not completing homework and fighting on the playground. The intervention is introduced and, again, the social worker continues to obtain measures relating to both of these behaviors. Data on completion of homework can be obtained simply by asking the teacher to record this information from her grade book. Fighting on the playground can be measured by a report from the staff on duty who monitor this activity.

If done carefully, multiple baseline designs can approach the scientific rigor usually found in experimental designs with control groups. For this reason, and because single client designs are easily implemented in school settings, this paper concludes with an illustration of a practice evaluation using a multiple baseline design.

A Practice Evaluation of Interventions Aimed at Reducing Truancy

Kay, a school social worker, was assigned to three middle schools whose staff had asked for a program that would decrease truancy and improve problem students' academic performance in their schools. This had been an interest of Kay's for several years and she knew from reading professional journals that there were several different types of programs intended to address these problems. She could not, however, find any research findings that compared the effectiveness of these programs or that speculated about their differential effects on different kinds of students. Based on the articles she had read, however, Kay was able to select three different interventions to implement.

1. Individual case work with the truant and the child's family.
2. Peer groups for truants.
3. Consultation and support for the teacher of the truant child.

Because she could find no guidance about which intervention might be best, Kay decided to do an evaluation. She knew she could design an evaluation so that she could evaluate all three interventions during the first year. If one intervention turned out to be more effective than the others, she could then implement it in the other two schools during the second year. She could do this, she knew, because this was an opportunity to do a scientific experiment—something that most social workers don't often have a chance to do.

The question she had to ask was, "Which type of intervention is the most effective in reducing truancy and improving academic performance among middle school students?" This question concerns intervention results—it would require her to compare the outcomes of the three interventions. To do this she knew she could use either a ***group design*** or a ***single subject*** design. What to do?

Kay knew that individual students would be referred on a staggered basis throughout the entire school year, thus she would not have a large enough number of students at any one time for a group design. Single subject it would have to be! She would evaluate the attendance and school performance of children one at a time, and perhaps learn something about individual differences. Then she could aggregate the outcomes for each program and compare the kids in one school with those in the others.

The outcome measures were the next consideration. Kay wanted to do this evaluation with a minimum of effort because this was far from her only assignment. She decided to look at the student files in the target schools to see what information being routinely collected could be used as indicators of intervention success. She discovered that the files contained daily attendance, the number of days the student was tardy, instances of misbehavior requiring disciplinary action, standardized test scores, and cumulative

transcript of class grades. Because attendance and tardiness were direct indicators of intervention success she decided they would be good measures of outcome. In addition, she decided she wanted a more descriptive indicator. She would ask the classroom teacher to keep a record of whether or not Billy's homework was turned in and was acceptable. Table 1 summarizes key elements of Kay's practice evaluation design.

Table 1: Summary of Kay's Practice Evaluation Design

Goal of interventions:	**reduce truancy**
Subjects:	**individual truant children**
Type of evaluation:	**single subject outcome with reversal**
Indicators of success:	**student's ability to: (1) attend school daily, (2) get to school on time, (3) turn in homework daily**
Source of data:	**central office student file and classroom teacher**
Number of Data Points:	**weekly**

Kay spent several months getting the three programs up and running in the three schools: Washington had casework, Adams had peer groups, and Jefferson had teacher consultation. Kay was staffing the Washington program, but for the others she had to train staff. Finally, the first referral was made to the truancy program at Washington—a 14-year-old boy named Billy G. Kay set up a file for Billy on her office computer using a spread sheet program, then went to the central office file and collected the needed information for the prior six weeks (number of days per week Billy was truant and tardy). She then went to Billy's teacher and asked to see his grade book to determine the number of times in the prior four weeks Billy had not done his homework. Back in her office she entered these frequencies in the spreadsheet. Kay and her staff followed this procedure for each student referred to the three programs.

Over the next 12 weeks Kay periodically returned to the central file and to Billy's teacher, retrieved the needed data, and entered it into Billy's file. When Billy left the program Kay reviewed the spread sheet (Table 2) that contained the indicators she had selected for outcome success.

It was very evident from the data that her work with Billy had had the desired effect; by all three indicators Billy's performance in school had improved. During their last session, Kay showed Billy a line chart generated from her spread sheet program that demonstrated Billy's improvement (Figure 1).

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Table 2: Results of Kay's Intervention with Billy G. as Indicated by Decreasing Instances of Truancy, Tardiness, and Homework Not Done

week	#truant per week	#tardy per week	#days H-N-D
1	3	5	5
2	3	5	5
3	2	5	4
4	4	4	5
5	4	4	4
6	3	5	4
7	3	5	5
8	4	4	4
9	4	4	4
10	3	4	3
11	3	3	4
12	2	4	3
13	3	3	4
14	2	2	3
15	0	1	2
16	1	1	2
17	0	1	2
18	0	1	2

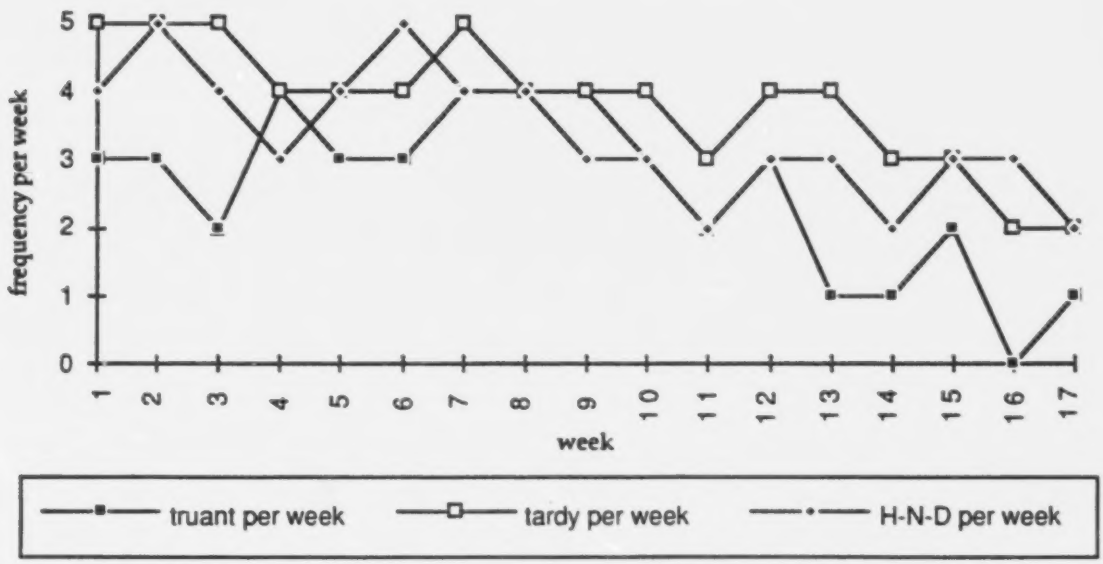

Figure 1: Line Chart Showing Results of Kay's Intervention with Billy G. as Indicated by Decreasing Instances of Truancy, Tardiness, and Homework-Not-Done Across 17 Weeks

One year after they had started the three programs, Kay and her staff took a day to study the line charts of the 60 children that had started and finished one of the three programs. They separated the charts by school, and by visual inspection and comparing the three groups of charts they drew the following conclusions:

1. The casework program at Washington School had been the most successful in reducing truancy and tardiness and increasing the number of days students completed acceptable homework.

2. In addition, it was clear that the intervention and not some other factor had been responsible for the change in student behavior.

This second conclusion was based on the following evidence. Each student in the Washington casework program had been served for four months and then service had been withdrawn for two months. The staff had continued to monitor the students' performance during these two months. In almost every case, the students' behavior had reverted to its pre-intervention level.

Figure 2 illustrates this phenomenon; Billy G.'s data has been averaged by month for the nine month school year. Billy G.'s line chart, like most of the others at Washington School, showed deteriorating behavior during months 5 and 6. This, in evaluation terms, is called a reversal. Since Billy reverted to his pre-intervention indicators when the intervention was withdrawn, we can assume that it was the intervention that was responsible for this improvement in these areas. And, indeed, when he returned to the program in months 7 through 9, the improvements returned!

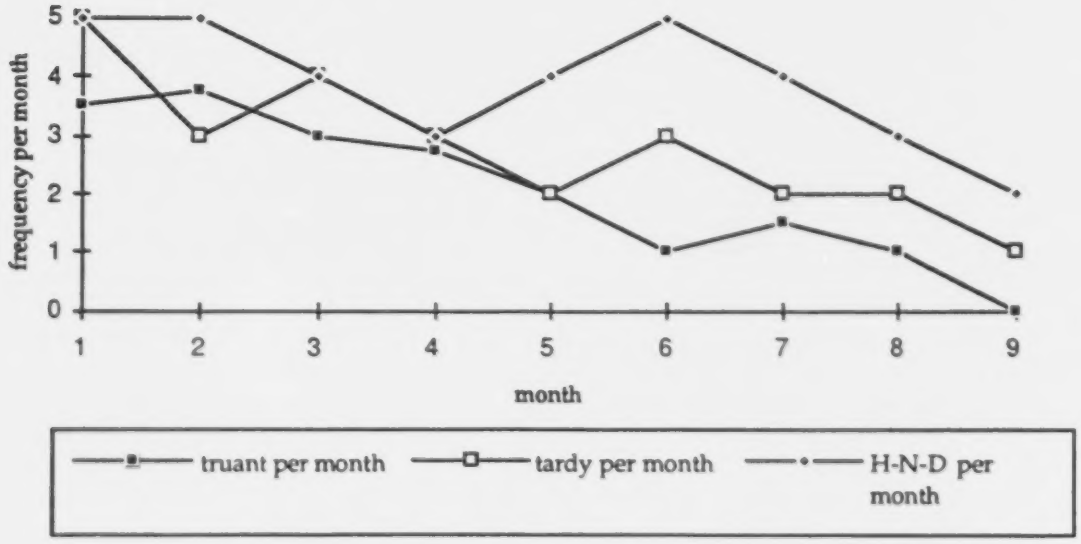

Figure 2: Line Chart Showing Results of Kay's Intervention with Billy G. as Indicated by Decreasing Instances of Truancy, Tardiness, and Homework-Not-Done Across 9 Months

At the end of the year Kay and her staff, in their report to the various school personnel and the superintendent, were able to present hard evidence that not only was the casework effective but that it was consistently more effective than the other two interventions throughout the school year.

In analyzing and comparing the line charts, it was also evident that the casework approach was especially effective with girls and younger children of both genders. Based on these findings, the report recommended the implementation of the casework intervention in all middle schools in the district, with the proviso that older boys required an enhanced approach including either the peer group or consultation model. The comparative effectiveness of these two additions to the casework program for boys would be tested during the next year.

Best Practices

It goes without saying that school social workers need to integrate evaluation with practice. Although the guidelines or best practice statements are given throughout this article, they are delineated here. It should be noted that decisions in relation to the following must be made before the single system design is implemented.

The target of the evaluation effort must be stated. Is intervention for the purpose of individual change or group change?

The goal of the intervention must be operationalized and described in measurable terms. Poor self-concept, acting out behavior, and poor peer relations are examples of behaviors that need to be described in more concrete and measurable terms.

A reliable and valid measuring instrument(s) or data collection device must be chosen. This device must accurately measure the behavior that one hopes to change through intervention. This same measuring tool is used during the intervention at several different times.

Related to the above, it must be decided from whom the data will be collected—e.g., student, teacher, or parent. This needs to be a collaborative effort. A school social worker cannot expect a teacher to complete a checklist or observe certain behaviors if the teacher has not been involved from the very beginning in assessment and intervention planning.

The frequency of collecting data must be decided. While data must be collected several times during the intervention, the situation itself will impact on how often data are collected. Obviously you will not ask a student to complete a self-concept scale on a daily basis. You may ask that same student to count on a daily basis the number of times he or she initiated contact with another student.

If practice evaluation is to have an impact beyond an individual social worker's practice, then a means of aggregating data across practitioners must be established. Staudt and Craft (1992) describe an information management system that has been used in school social work practice. Such a system can begin to provide overall effectiveness of certain interventions with various population groups.

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Chapter 6

Best Practices in the Supervision of School Social Work Practicum Students

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and
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This chapter examines best practices in school social work practicum supervision. The literature review raises issues pertaining to strengthening the linkage between the AEA and the educational institution, the teaching of core skills, contracting with the student to ensure responsible service delivery while facilitating student learning, evaluating performance, and dealing with ethical issues in the supervisor/student relationship. Best practices have been identified which have implications for the future of school social work. Increasing the collaborative efforts among the AEA, the educational institution and the community is imperative if the practicum is to provide a sound foundation for school social work practice.

School social workers who commit themselves to the supervision of a practicum student accept a significant responsibility. They provide feedback and modeling opportunities for defining expectations of performance, as well as assisting in formulating learning objectives and activities that must be achieved if the practicum experience is to be successful.

The practicum is currently the essential component of social work education. In Iowa, the importance of the school social work practicum experience is reflected in school social worker licensure requirements. Effective October 1, 1988, licensure requires a masters degree from an accredited school of social work and 20 semester hours of course work in assessment, intervention, and related studies. A practicum in school social work is stipulated along with courses in general and special education (Iowa Administrative Code, 1989). Consequently, the number of graduate students requiring school social work practicums is likely to increase.

Current practice for graduate school social work students involves a two-term practicum. Multiple practicum placements can be arranged under certain circumstances at the University of Iowa (Handbook for Practicum Social Work, 1990). A liaison is assigned to develop and coordinate the practicum. The student is placed in an arena where a myriad of expectations must be negotiated. The learning contract guides the practicum experience and facilitates the student's self-assessment as well as assessment of the agency.

The need for well-defined school social work practicum expectations is accentuated by the itinerant nature of school social work practice. In addition, Iowa's rural environment contributes to geographic isolation making it difficult for practicum instructors who do not reside in communities where there is a school of social work or a satellite campus to remain informed and involved in the educational institutions' expectations. As a result, it is not uncommon for practicum supervisors to instruct a school social worker on a sporadic basis.

Intermediate educational agencies and local school districts have an array of procedural and service priorities for school social workers. The demands of working in a host setting as a practicum school social worker are additional stressors.

The above factors support the need to identify best practices in supervising school social work practicum students. Only through this process can expectations be clarified and consistency in school social work services be obtained.

Literature Review

Richan (1989) addresses the vital role of the field instructor by expanding on the concept of empowerment as it relates to the field practicum. His study of students in a field practicum based in a low income community revealed that the student's sense of empowerment depended on the kind of feedback he or she received. "The critical source of feedback was the field instructor" (p. 276). Richan adds, "Students of the Human Services Project have said consistently, with near unanimity, that the critical factor in their field experience has been the field instructor" (p. 282). Professional attitudes are developed by modeling the field instructor.

Strengthening the linkage between the agency and the educational institution is essential in order to prepare students for social work service. Epstein (1984) studied the perceptions of practicum field instructors for the University of Georgia's School of Social Work. The results from the 67 respondents indicated that 88% were aware of practicum objectives and 57% believed the students were well prepared (p. 1). The respondents identified interviewing skills and knowledge of human development and behavior as skill areas that they believed needed to be prioritized. Epstein states, "Fifty-four percent replied that students had some type of theoretical base of information while 30 percent suggested students did not have identified or recognizable cognitive perspectives" (p. 12).

Epstein (1984) requested the field instructors to rank methods for monitoring student performance according to their usefulness. Conferences with students were rated by 85.1% as being the most useful (p. 21). Personal observations, audio and videotapes of activities, written records, student self-assessment, conferences with faculty liaisons, and reliance on learning plans were other methods used to assess student progress.

Epstein (1984) discusses improvements to strengthen the linkage between agencies and educational institutions. He comments, "The balance of respondents called for greater assistance from faculty on helping to define individualized educational goals, in being

more accessible, on demonstrating knowledge of practice settings, and being able to assist in the integration of theory and practice" (p. 20).

Tolson and Kopp (1988) studied first year graduate social work students' work in the practicum and the degree to which skills were transferred from classes to the field setting. The modified Structured Clinical Record (SCR) (Videka-Sherman & Reid, 1985) was used to provide students an opportunity to summarize their work in a structured manner. The authors state, "The model is designed to teach students to evaluate their own practice and to apply their practice evaluation knowledge and skills to their work with clients in the field" (p. 124).

Data indicated that the orientation of the practicum instructor affected the practice behaviors of students more than any other factor examined. "The eclectic orientation was associated with fewer interviews, shorter contact, fewer problems, and fewer interventions" (p. 131). Practicum student's satisfaction with the case was determined greatly by the type of termination.

Teaching students time-limited approaches is crucial during their skill development (p. 132). The authors add, "It is believed that advances in effectiveness depend on enhancing our ability to match interventions with clients and problems" (p. 133). Students must be prepared to intervene with diverse problems using a myriad of interventions.

Larsen and Hepworth (1982) conducted an empirical study on how to enhance practicum instruction. In this comparative study, the traditional practicum instruction differed significantly from the experimental competency-based/task-centered instruction. The traditional instruction was less systematic, less task-focused, and more centered on case dynamics than on skill performance (p. 53).

Teaching core skills and defining objectives are essential to effective practicum instruction. The authors note, "Moreover, the selected skills listed below are relevant to virtually all problem situations encountered in social work practice:

Eliciting sufficient information to understand clients' problems;
Drawing out and empathizing accurately with clients' feelings;
Forming positive helping relationships with clients;
Maintaining focus and providing direction in interviews;
Moving from general problems to more basic problems;
Focusing on 'here and now' experiences in the helping relationship;
Relating authentically in ways that facilitate progress;
Focusing on client's strengths and accrediting increments of growth;
Redefining problem situations (reframing) and problematic behaviors in different perspectives that make growth and change possible;
Identifying dysfunctional behavioral patterns and assisting clients to recognize how they contribute to difficulties;
Clarifying the client's role and responsibilities in the helping process;
Clarifying the social worker's role in the helping process;
Mutually negotiating specific problem-related goals;
Mutually negotiating tasks and subtasks to be accomplished by clients." (p. 52)

Performance levels for all 14 skills were higher for the experimental group, and these students also reported higher levels of confidence (p. 54). Professional growth for the instructor can also be a significant by-product of skill-centered instruction.

Smith, Faria, and Brownstein (1986) conducted a study of the role of the faculty field liaison by surveying 88 MSW degree-granting programs. Liaison responsibilities were reported to be diverse and complex, and the authors encouraged more uniformity and training in regards to the liaison role.

This study was expanded upon by the same authors in 1988. Field instructors were surveyed, and perceptions of the liaison role were generally positive. The liaison role was described by the subjects as being quite diverse although they frequently left out the roles of advisor, advocate, teacher, and administrator. The authors do raise several questions about faculty field liaisons as a result of their survey, including whether liaison responsibilities are sufficiently articulated and whether field instructors consistently consult with their liaisons.

Regular small group meetings between field instructors and liaisons are beneficial for providing opportunities for consultation and enhancing communication. Bogo (1981) discusses a model for strengthening linkages between field and faculty instructors. Through the use of small groups of field instructors, consistency in interpreting student performance expectations is obtained and the sense of isolationism is reduced. Bogo emphasizes that job mobility and varying agency practices create large numbers of first-time field instructors, further underscoring the necessity of strong linkages between faculty and field instructors.

The contracting process between the student and the field instructor is viewed by Bogo as being crucial for student engagement. He states, "Contracting or goal and objective setting is viewed as an education strategy for providing a means to early engagement in a mutual process of negotiation wherein direction and purpose of the student's practicum in a specific agency take place" (p. 62). Through the contract, the learning of therapy and practice can be realized.

Bogo (1981) does raise issues that are crucial for the field instructor to consider. A balance needs to be achieved between enhancing the self-awareness of students while avoiding therapeutic interactions with students. The field instructor must guard against taking primary responsibility for the learning process and realize the vital role of self-direction.

Bogo adds, "Conflict with other personnel in the setting, such as an interdisciplinary team is another area of concern. How much protection should the instructor provide for the student and for the institution in order to facilitate student learning, while still providing responsible service delivery?" (p. 63). He stresses that instructors must possess a high level of understanding of performance expectations, both from the agency and from the educational institution, in order to carry out their teaching.

Evaluation of student learning must be viewed as a process rather than an end product if instructors are to adequately facilitate growth while still ensuring responsible service delivery. The literature review documents an array of evaluation techniques including

self-assessment, verbal reports, direct supervision, co-leadership, audio tapes, audiovisual tapes and group instruction.

The University of Iowa School of Social Work *Handbook for Practicum in Social Work* (1990) recommends procedures for student evaluation. The instructor and the student must discuss the student's self-evaluation within the first two weeks of placement. Included in the first term evaluation is a narrative identifying learning experiences provided, student strengths, and future learning needs of the student.

Both the instructor and the student must provide input in the evaluation process. At the end of the final term, the student documents in a narrative how theory and practice integrate and describes his/her professional identity. The instructor also conducts an overall assessment.

Bogo (1981) summarized the phases of field instruction as engagement, assessment, planning, carrying out the learning and teaching, and evaluation and future planning. Epley Birtwistle and Lindgren (1990) apply the stage process specifically to the school social work practicum experience. In their paradigm, the level of supervision is adjusted depending on school social work tasks as well as the needs of the students. They note, "Supervision of the practicum school social worker requires a recognition of the level of intensity of supervision that is beneficial in enhancing the student's professional growth. A paradigm which emphasizes supervision as a fluid and multidimensional process and which incorporates the supervisor's and student's reactions to situations is crucial" (p. 81). The paradigm underscores the dual focus on tasks and processes necessary for successful practicum instruction.

The authors delineate school social work tasks and categorize them as follows: initial evaluations, comprehensive re-evaluations, individual counseling, group counseling, community referrals, and consultation.

They depict four levels of skill development for teaching these tasks. Epley Birtwistle and Lindgren (1990) note, "The web-like structure of the paradigm indicates that a student may be at one level of skill in the area of individual counseling and yet another level when consultation skills are involved. The progression of skill development with these tasks follows the framework of situational leadership" (p. 82).

Shadowing is the first level. During this period the practicum school social worker pairs his or her schedule closely to the supervisor. Energy is directed toward explaining procedures, and engagement occurs through the development of the learning contract.

The second level is referred to as ***co-activities***. The emphasis is on prioritization of school social work tasks and co-facilitating activities (e.g., social skills groups, parenting classes). Instruction occurs primarily through modeling and is characterized by high task/high relationship behavior. Dialogue between instructor and student is vital in developing coping mechanisms during this level. The instructor is likely to feel overly responsible for the student's learning process during co-activities whereas the student experiences feelings of being overloaded with assessment impressions and intervention strategies.

The third level is described as *independent activities* and is "characterized by joint decision-making and facilitation by the instructor" (p. 84). The instructor strives to assist the practicum school social worker to link tasks and to gain a holistic perspective when problem-solving. Issues to consider during this level include developing the practicum social worker's knowledge of community resources, the practicum student's interactions with the interdisciplinary team, adequacy of accountability methods, and how to effectively assist the practicum social work student in terminating cases or making follow-up recommendations.

The fourth level of the school social work activity paradigm is *specific interests*. The practicum school social worker may conduct groups independently or initiate a research project. The instructor's style during this level is described by delegation. During this final period, the practicum school social worker reinforces his/her confidence level through independent activities, and the instructor works to enhance the integration of theory and practice.

The student has the foundation to discuss the application of ethical issues and explore how his/her professional identity has been shaped by the practicum experience. Additional issues in the latter stages of the practicum experience pertain to the student's perceptions of the need to be involved in professional organizations, networking opportunities with colleagues, and future opportunities for mentorship once the practicum has ended.

Cross-cultural issues in social work practicum instruction have received little attention. McRoy, Freeman, Logan, and Blackman (1986) conducted an exploratory study of cross-cultural field supervisory dyads. Areas of concern were identified and suggestions were given for improving communication in cross-cultural field instruction.

The authors note that cross-cultural supervision provides opportunities for the instructor to model cultural diversity and has the potential for increasing awareness of racial attitudes. Results of the study, however, indicated that both field instructors and students identified more potential problems than advantages. Problematic factors reported by field instructors were numerous and included lack of knowledge of cultural differences, language barriers, prejudice, poor communication, and failure to recognize student strengths (p. 53).

Students responded to concerns about working with clients of different racial backgrounds. They perceived that they frequently lacked understanding of informal support systems in minority communities. They acknowledged communication difficulties, misunderstanding of client values, and difficulty working with clients who were deeply prejudiced (p. 54).

According to the authors, it is imperative that schools of social work provide curriculum regarding racial and ethnic issues, utilize minority field instructors, and strengthen linkages with agencies administered by minorities and agencies who serve minorities. Enhancing communication in a cross-cultural dyad is imperative and can be facilitated both by the field liaison and the practicum instructor. Suggestions include role playing through role reversals, special reading assignments and the purposeful

assignment of cases to emphasize race and ethnicity issues in cross-cultural student/client relationships (p. 55).

Ethical issues in the practicum setting have frequently been glossed over in the literature. Jacobs (1991) addresses the interactional components of the student/supervisory relationship and warns the reader of the consequences of severe dysfunctional relationships. Due to the dual teaching and caretaking components in the practicum, supervisors may be "vulnerable to using their power to gratify self-esteem needs of their own" (p. 130). Jacobs adds, "Students also may replicate aspects of harmful interactions (modeling effect) with supervisors in a parallel process with clients, thereby extending the influence of the dysfunctional supervisor into succeeding generations of clients" (p. 130).

Academic instruction prior to the practicum must assist the student to be cognizant of the interactional components of the supervisory experience and prepare the student to explore feelings generated during the practicum. The author underscores the need for open dialogue about feelings and coping mechanisms noting, "Because students are emotionally vulnerable in the context of their supervision, they are in a poor position to advocate for themselves should the boundaries of the relationship break down" (p. 133).

Supervisor/student relationships are not addressed in the NASW Code of Ethics, but Jacobs believes the relationship has qualities present in the relationship types of client, colleague, and friend. Clarifying the ethical responsibilities of supervisors is imperative if students are to have the opportunity during their practicum to learn about their own interactional style and circumvent situations that "are particularly conducive to the development of abuse in the supervisory relationship" (p. 134).

Jacobs prepared a checklist of questions to guard against a dysfunctional relationship with the supervisor which include the following factors: the awareness of feelings of comfort or discomfort when working with the supervisor, the degree of supervisor accessibility, the student's perception of being accepted or labeled, the supervisor's willingness to own a share of a difficulty rather than blame, and the supervisor's encouragement for students to discuss issues with the field liaison rather than stifle communication (p. 134).

The literature documents that social work practicum supervision is a complex aspect of social work practice. Factors raised in the literature review include linkages between the agency and the educational setting, the importance of both a theoretical foundation for the student and skill-centered instruction. Student engagement through the learning contact and methods of evaluation were addressed in the literature review. Levels of school social work practicum instruction have implications for best practice statements. Cross-cultural issues and ethical issues present in the supervisory/student relationship require further exploration by school social workers.

Best Practices

The following best practices shou'd be considered in developing procedures for supervising school social work practicum students.

It is essential that there be strong evidence of planning and coordination between the University School of Social Work and the practice sites. Course work needs to support the practicum setting. The traditional social work course work in human growth, development, assessment, and various interventions (such as group work, individual work, interviewing and consultation) needs to continue to be a requirement. In addition, courses in both general and special education are necessary before the practicum placement occurs in order to facilitate the student's ability to be a contributing member to a team.

School social work supervisors within the state need to coordinate and agree upon basic practicum expectations. This would encourage the university to develop a course work plan/outline for those students who have a specific interest in school social work as a practicum placement and potential employment area. In addition, such coordination would serve to assure the university and its students that there was consistency among the school social work practicum sites. This would facilitate mobility opportunities for employment.

It is imperative that the practicum address legal and ethical issues for the particular setting. Since the school social work practicum takes place in an educational setting, it will be necessary for the student to utilize this time to learn and understand school law as well as family law. In Iowa, as in many other states, school social work is linked very closely with special education which will require that the practicum student become familiar with P. L. 101-476, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (formerly known as The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975), as well as P. L. 99-457, Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers with Handicaps. It is equally important that the NASW Code of Ethics be attended to both in teaching and modeling.

Regularly scheduled conferences between the practicum supervisor (field instructor) and student are essential as are conferences between the practicum supervisor and the placement coordinator (field liaison) from the university. As stated earlier, Epstein (1984) found that field instructors rated conferences with practicum students as being the most useful method for monitoring student performance. Richan (1989) found that the feedback from the field instructor was the critical element for students. Frequency of these conferences may vary from student to student depending upon previous experiences, skill development, and activities of the practicum experience. Conferences between the practicum supervisor and the placement coordinator are essential in order that practicum objectives are clearly defined, understood, and agreed upon by all parties.

The university placement coordinator needs to make in-person, on-site visits in order to give practicum supervisors support and assistance in defining individualized student goals. At the same time, the placement coordinator needs to demonstrate knowledge of the practice settings in order to assist students in integrating theory with

practice (Epstein, 1984). In addition, there needs to be a mechanism for communication with the placement coordinator between visits.

Individualized learning objectives should be developed for each school social work practicum student. Inservice training for students should be efficiently designed and purposefully directed at accomplishing these learning objectives.

Teaching should be the primary mission of practicum placements. This can be accomplished through the utilization of numerous techniques:

1. During the initial stage of the placement, the student will shadow the practicum supervisor. This is the critical time when the student will "join" or "connect" with the supervisor which sets the stage for the remainder of the placement. It is here, during the first level of the Epley Birtwistle and Lindgren (1990) paradigm that the student will begin to become familiar with the placement setting and learn about basic procedures.

2. Modeling by the supervisor will occur throughout the placement, but probably never more so than when the supervisor and student work together on activities. As noted previously, it is crucial that the practicum supervisor demonstrate behaviors that are consistent with school social work ethics as well as modeling best practice activities.

3. Journal writing by the student is an effective tool for personal and professional growth. It can be the basis for supervisory conferences where observations, impressions, and concerns can be discussed. It can also be utilized during practice seminars.

4. The use of audio and/or videotapes should be seriously considered as the student moves into more independent activities. Tapes provide an excellent tool for observation and feedback by the supervisor.

5. The student should be afforded the opportunity to attend committee meetings, supervisory/administrative meetings, board meetings, etc., to observe the process for developing policy and procedures as well as their implementation and monitoring.

It is important that the student understands how the role of the school social worker fits into the host agency and develops an awareness of the numerous systems that coordinate and collaborate with each other. This would include the interdisciplinary team(s) with whom he/she is working, the agency's role in the community as well as the statewide, regional and national macro-systems. This could be accomplished through flow-charts, mission statements and interviews. The student could begin to identify gaps and overlap in the service delivery system. It is critical that the school social work practicum student visit and learn about the services of other agencies and resources. Through a structured interview, the student could learn about the referral process, eligibility criteria, services available, contact person, etc. The student might develop a resource file to share with colleagues. It is important that the student have a basic understanding of how those services interface with the services provided by

school social workers and other agency personnel. The power and importance of personal contact with these resources cannot be over-emphasized.

It is imperative that there be a clear plan as to what steps need to be taken if the placement is not working. It is crucial that the supervisor and coordinator share this responsibility. The university needs to be clear in their expectations of the practicum supervisor in the evaluation. It is recommended that a collaborative model be included where all parties (practicum supervisor, student, placement coordinator) have the opportunity to provide input and learn from each other.

Considerations and Implications for the Future

The best practices discussed have implications for the future direction of school social work practice. Although students currently develop a learning contract and are involved in ongoing evaluation during the course of their practicum, increased consistency in practicum supervision is imperative. Without this consistency, prospective school social workers will lack the necessary skills to meet the demands of the future.

In order to assist students in developing skills, the following actions need to be taken:

1. Increase the emphasis on school social work as a viable career option at the university level.

2. Continue the development of a course of study that will meet requirements for school social work licensure.

3. Develop a training program and support system for on-site practicum supervisors.

4. Increase the use of technology (e.g. computers, videotapes) to enhance skill development on the part of practicum students and their clients.

5. Increase the emphasis on developing the skills to access resources for preventative efforts with children and families.

Summary and Conclusions

Supervision of practicum students provides the opportunity for professional growth and the vehicle to influence the direction of school social work practice. The task of supervision is compounded by the multiple skills and roles required of school social workers. In addition, the complex issues challenging human service delivery systems mandate that practicum supervision demonstrates quality practice. It will become even more crucial for school social workers to be skilled in collaboration, goal oriented intervention, systems analysis, and interagency networking in order to address the needs of families and children in the 21st century.

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Suggested Readings for Practicum Students

Kidder, T. (1989). *Among school children*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

This is a work of nonfiction that assesses a fifth grade classroom in an inner city school. It illustrates the demands placed on the classroom teacher and the stressors in students' lives. The book would assist graduate students in understanding school social work from a systems perspective.

Kurtz, P. D., & Barth, R. P. (1989). Parent involvement: cornerstone of school social work practice. *Social Work, 34*(5), 407-413.

The authors discuss the critical role parents play in student success and their observations that school social workers are extensively involved with parents. They emphasize that documentation of the effectiveness of this involvement must occur if support for school social work is to increase.

Oberhofer Dane B., & Simon, B. (1991). Resident guests: social workers in host settings. *Social Work, 36*(3), 208-213.

A school social worker functions in a host setting. The authors examine problems that social workers confront as resident guests in a host setting. Recommendations are given for dealing with role ambiguity and issues of autonomy. This article would be beneficial in conveying to the student the nature of host settings and the importance of school social work collaboration.

Parent-Educator Connection, Iowa Department of Education. (1989). *Picking up the pieces*. Des Moines, IA: Author.

This is a compilation of articles written by parents of children with special needs that describes their experiences of grief, coping, and adjustment.

Staudt, M., & Kerl, S. (1987). Defining the school social worker's role by developing service priorities. *Social Work in Education, 10*(1), 5-12.

The article focuses on establishing service priorities through school social work consultation at the building level. Written by two former Iowa school social workers, the article is recommended for both field instructors and students to reinforce prioritization skills.

Zischka, P. C., & Fox, R. (1985). Consultation as a function of school social work. *Social Work in Education, 7*(2), 69-79.

The authors examine the nature of consultation as it pertains to school social work. Principles involved in consultation include availability, identification, readiness to act in crisis situations, role modeling, and catalyzing.

Suggested Readings for Practicum Supervisors

Jacobs, C. (1991). Violations of the supervisory relationship: An ethical and educational blind spot. *Social Work, 36*(2), 130-135.

> The author expands on the complexity of student-supervisory relationships. Factors which may signal dysfunction and possible sources of exploitation are identified. The article is recommended as a resource for field instructors to augment understanding of the power differential between supervisor and students.

Reamer, F. G. (1989). Liability issues in social work supervision. *Social Work, 34*(5), 445-448.

> The author discusses liability and field education. Issues raised include students driving agency vehicles as well as students' access to agency files.

Weinbach, R. W. (1984). Implementing change: Insights and strategies for the supervisor. *Social Work, 29*(3), 282-286.

> The author elaborates on organizational change and how it can be enhanced by the supervisor's knowledge of the change process. A school social work practicum supervisor would benefit from reading the section on preventing resistance to change.